## Travail de fin de cycle : The Text Genre of the Press Article in Foreign Language Teaching: Focus on the Tabloid Press Article in the EFL Classroom

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# The Text Genre of the Press Article in Foreign Language Teaching: Focus on the Tabloid Press Article in the EFL Classroom

Travail de fin d'études présenté par Camille HAUMONT en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation générale, à finalité didactique

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Finally, I will end these acknowledgements with warm thoughts to my loved ones, who always motivated and helped me from the beginning of my studies.

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# List of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| *CEFR* | *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* |
| CFB | Communauté française de Belgique |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| *OALD* | *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* |
| WBF | Wallonia-Brussels Federation |

# 1. <u>Introduction</u>

## 1.1 Research motivation

During the first year of my master's degree in Modern languages and literatures, I had to think about the topic of my dissertation and search for my supervisor. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to write a dissertation in didactics. So far in my curriculum, I had mainly written papers in literature and linguistics in the context of my bachelor's degree in Modern languages and literatures. As I am doing a master's degree in didactics to become a secondary school foreign language teacher, I am interested in the field of didactics. Choosing this topic as the main subject of my dissertation was an opportunity for me to deal with this topic in depth.

I thus contacted Professor Germain Simons, who teaches *Didactique spéciale en langues et littératures modernes* to ask him if he would be interested in supervising the writing of my dissertation, which he happened to accept. In addition, Professor Lieselotte Brems, who is a specialist in the field of English linguistics, kindly agreed to be my co-supervisor, which is a valuable contribution to the writing of this dissertation.

Then, I had to think about the topic I wanted to discuss, and after some discussion with Prof. Simons, I decided to focus on the text genre of the press article. As the press article covers a broad theme, I narrowed down my research on the tabloid press article in the teaching of English as a foreign language. I considered the idea of dealing with the tabloid press article because, nowadays, teachers, as well as students, are surrounded by mass media on a daily basis. Moreover, students tend to be familiar with reality shows and celebrity-related content, two types of material that somehow resemble tabloid press articles and that circulate on social networks. This type of content tends to be mainly about gossip, which is, I have to admit it, one of my guilty pleasures, and I think that I am not the only one. In addition, I decided to choose this topic because I thought that this kind of content could motivate students and that it would be interesting to find out if it has any interest for learning English as a foreign language.

## 1.2 Approach and research questions

I decided to use a "funnel method" for the development of my dissertation with the aim of, chapter by chapter, leading the reader to the main topic of this work: the tabloid press article in English as a foreign language.

Before tackling the subject of the tabloid press article and the presentation of its characteristics, I will provide the reader with a theoretical framework on the concepts of the text

genre in general and, in particular, on the press article as a text genre. After, I will present the characteristics of the tabloid press article as a text type. Following these various theoretical points, I will present the interests of the tabloid press article for the teaching and learning of English.

Then, I will consider the legal requirements (i.e., the reference document and the curricula of Francophone Belgium) to search for evidence of the press article and analyse a textbook corpus to see if it contains tabloid press articles.

After dealing with what is advised by legal requirements and proposed in textbooks, I will present a survey on the use of the (tabloid) press article by the Francophone Belgian teachers from the Liège Province.

The last chapter will consist of methodological suggestions for the use of the (tabloid) press article in class, as well as an example of a didactic sequence on this text genre.

In order to direct my research and articulate the different chapters of this dissertation, I formulated the following research questions:

*Table 1 - Research questions*

| | |
|---|---|
| (1) | Does the notion of the press article appear in the legal requirements of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (WBF) and in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (*CEFR*)? |
| (2) | What are the characteristics of the press article as a text genre? |
| (3) | What are the characteristics of the tabloid press article? |
| (4) | What are the advantages of using tabloid press articles for English teaching and learning? |
| (5) | (a) Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles? |
| | (b) If recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles, how are they presented and what is their purpose for English learning? |
| (6) | (a) Do foreign language teachers use the press article? |
| | (b) If so, what are their objectives to teach it and their methodology? |
| | (c) If not, what are their reasons? |
| (7) | (a) Do English teachers use the tabloid press article? |
| | (b) If so, what are their methodology and objectives to teach it? |
| | (c) If not, what are their reasons? |

## 2.  <u>Theoretical provisions</u>

As this dissertation is based on a generic approach to the notions of the press article as a text genre and the tabloid press article as text type, it is important to first consider the concept of *text genre*. The main aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with theoretical provisions about this concept. First, in Section 2.1, I will introduce different approaches to this concept in order to present the definition that I think is the best to use within the context of this dissertation. Thereafter, in Section 2.2, I will present the learning and teaching advantages of text genres. After the introduction of these theoretical points, I will propose a generic approach to the press article in Section 2.3. Then, this chapter will end with a focus on the characteristics of the tabloid press article as a text type (see Section 2.4) and the presentation of its interests for teaching and learning English as a foreign language (see Section 2.5).

### 2.1   The notion of text genre

As Hyland (2012) mentions in his article, "Genre: language, context, and literacy", the notion of text genre in the context of language teaching and learning has been tackled by numerous authors. In the framework of this dissertation, I will present his views on this subject as well as other authors' ideas, including those of Lee, Biber, Dolz and Gagnon, Schneuwly and Simons. Citing these authors is a way to demonstrate the variety with which the notion of text genre has been approached as they represent the English[1] as well as Francophone[2] sources regarding the theory of text genres.

According to Hyland (2012), the attention given to text genres is motivated by two purposes (p. 113). On the one hand, individuals want to understand the connection between language and its uses in specific communicative situations, and how these uses vary with time (p. 113). On the other hand, the second purpose is "to employ this knowledge in the service of language and literacy education" (Hyland, 2012, p. 113). He states that

> [g]enres are abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. Genre analysis is based
> on two central assumptions: that the features of a similar group of texts depend on the social
> context of their creation and use, and that those features can be described in a way that

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[1] Hyland is an English linguist who is specialised in the English language as a second language. Lee is a Doctor in Philosophy and Linguistics in Australia. Biber is an American linguist.

[2] Dolz and Gagnon, Schneuwly come from the University of Geneva. Simons is a doctor in Philosophy and Letters and is currently a lecturer at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures of the University of Liège.

relates a text to others like it and to the choices and constraints acting on the texts producers. (Hyland, 2012, p. 114)

If we consider this definition, genres are, in short, characterised by how individuals use language in specific language contexts.

Another English author, Lee, proposes another definition of the notion of text genre:

Genre is used when we view the text as a member of a category: a culturally recognized artifact, a grouping of texts according to some conventionally recognized criteria, a grouping according to purposive goals, culturally defined. […] Genres are categories established by consensus within a culture and hence subject to change as generic conventions are contested/challenged and revised, perceptibly or imperceptibly, over time. (Lee, 2001, p. 46)

In comparison with the definition given by Hyland, here, it seems that the two key elements that characterise a genre are culture- and time-related.

Biber has another approach to text genres:

Genres are the text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language. […] These categories are defined primarily on the basis of external format. Thus, newspaper articles are found in the news sections of newspapers; academic articles are found in academic journals. These distinctions are related to other differences in purpose and situation, and there are marked linguistic differences among the genres of English. (Biber, 1989, pp. 5-6)

In other words, the main characteristics of a genre according to Biber are its *external format*[3], its linguistic characteristics and the situation it is related to.

In "Le genre du texte, un outil didactique pour développer le langage oral et écrit", Dolz and Gagnon (2008) start from the principle that

tout membre d'une communauté est confronté à un univers de textes « déjà là », univers organisé en « genres » empiriques et historiques, c'est-à-dire en forme d'organisations concrètes qui se modifient avec le temps. Socialement et culturellement, tout texte est donc un exemplaire de genre. (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, pp. 180-181)

They also add that the notion of genre is based on several aspects: "l'ancrage social et la nature communicationnelle du discours […], [le] cadre pragmatique dans lequel tout texte s'inscrit et les caractéristiques formelles des textes produits" (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 181).

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[3] Note that this *external criteria* refers to: "intended audience, purpose, and activity type, that is, it refers to a conventional, culturally recognised grouping of texts based on properties other than lexical or grammatical (co-)occurrence features" (Lee, 2001, p.38). Biber distinguishes between *external criteria* which are characteristic of genres, and *internal criteria* which are characteristic of text types (Lee, 2001, p.38). (More about his definition of text type on page 9).

In addition, they consider that a text belongs to a genre regarding the activities it is associated with and its function in these activities. It is thus possible to identify a text as an example of a text genre if it gathers characteristics that are also shared by other texts in similar situations (p. 181). Another feature in the gathering of texts is that a text genre presents common linguistic units which are characteristics of this text genre (p. 182). It is also important to note that Dolz and Gagnon mention that genres also vary across cultures and languages.

Another author, Schneuwly, takes as a starting point that the genre is "un «méga-outil», comme une configuration stabilisée de plusieurs sous-systèmes sémiotiques (surtout langagiers, mais également para-langagiers) permettant d'agir efficacement dans une classe bien définie de situations de communication" (1994, p. 162).

The last author I want to cite in the presentation of the notion of the text genre is Simons. He developed what he calls an *operational definition* of the text genre:

> Le genre textuel est un regroupement de productions langagières, écrites, orales ou audio-visuelles[4], relativement stables, qui s'inscrivent dans une société, une culture et un temps donnés. La maitrise des caractéristiques d'un genre textuel est un outil qui permet d'agir dans une situation de communication donnée, tant en réception qu'en production[5]. (Simons, 2021-2022, p. 149)

In order to create this definition, Simons analysed and compared six different definitions coming from the Francophone as well as the English scientific fields in order to gather their common characteristics. As a result, the first part of the operational definition is based on

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[4] Note that the notion of "audiovisual" is not present in Simons' chapter "De place des genres textuels dans les familles de tâches en langues modernes" (2018a). However, it had been added by Simons in his syllabus *Didactique des langues modernes. Partim I*. University of Liège (2021-2022) on page 149. I thus decided to consider the modified and more recent version of this operational definition.

[5] English translation: "The text genre is a group of relatively stable written, oral or audiovisual language productions, which are part of a given society, culture and time. The mastery of the characteristics of a text genre is a tool which allows one to act in a given communication situation, both in reception and communication skills".

Reuter's[6], Chartrand's, Émery-Bruneau and Sénéchal's[7], and Maingueneau's[8] definitions. The second part of this definition comes from Schneuwly's definition, which is the only one to consider the text genre as "un outil qui permet d'agir dans la société" (Simons, 2018a, p. 48). As pointed out by Simons (p. 48), this last dimension of the text genre is crucial for the consideration of the *action-oriented approach* advised by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (*CEFR*):

> The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. (*CEFR*, 2018, p. 9)

According to the *CEFR* approach, learners are considered social agents. Hence, one way of preparing students to become such social agents is to use a genre-based approach, as a text genre is "un outil qui permet d'agir dans une situation de communication donnée, tant en réception qu'en communication" (Simons, 2018a, p. 48). In other words, the genre-based approach is in accordance with the action-oriented approach advised by the *CEFR*.

In the framework of this dissertation, I decided to use Simons' definition of text genre as I think this is the most complete because considers definitions coming from different scientific fields and their common main features. Moreover, it is the definition I am the most familiar with, as I learned about it during the first year of my master's degree in Didactics within the scope of the course *Didactique des langues modernes. Partim I* (2020-2021). In addition, this definition is also familiar to all the students that had this course. Indeed, this definition has been used and taught by Simons for eight years. Using this definition is thus a way to refer to this shared culture and facilitate understanding the notion of text genre.

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[6] "Les genres de discours sont des produits culturels, propres à une société donnée, élaborés au cours de son histoire et relativement stabilisés. Ils régissent les discours des membres de cette société engagés dans les infinies situations de la vie sociale" (Reuter, 2013, p. 117, as cited in Simons, 2018a, p.46).

[7] "On peut définir le genre comme un ensemble de productions langagières orales ou écrites, qui, dans une culture donnée, possèdent des caractéristiques communes d'ordres communicationnel, textuel, sémantique, grammatical, graphique ou visuel et / ou d'oralité, souples, mais relativement stables dans le temps" (Chartrand, Émery-Bruneau & Sénéchal, 2015, p.3, as cited in Simons, 2018a, p.47).

[8] "Un certain consensus s'est établi pour que le terme genre de discours (mais certains préfèrent parler de « genre de texte ») soit une catégorie de nature situationnelle, qui désigne des dispositifs de communication socio-historiquement définis : le fait divers, l'éditorial, la consultation médicale, l'interrogatoire policier, les petites annonces, la conférence universitaire, le rapport de stage, etc." (Maingueneau, 1996 / 2009, p.68, as cited in Simons, 2018a, p.47).

*2.1.1 Text genres and task families in modern languages*

Simons (2018a) argues that the text genre can be the central element in the gathering of *task families*. These are major groupings of communication activities mobilizing the same types of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Communauté française de Belgique [CFB], 2007, p. 2). The aim of these task families is to

> […] permettre au professeur d'éviter d'évaluer ses élèves à propos d'une tâche qu'il ne leur aurait pas appris à résoudre : la tâche de l'examen ou du contrôle doit nécessairement relever de la même famille que celles qui auront été travaillées durant l'apprentissage. CFB, 2007, p. 1)

These task families are gathered by means of three criteria:

> 1. le medium (oral/écrit) et le rôle énonciatif de l'élève (production/réception), ces deux paramètres déterminant la distinction compréhension orale/écrite *versus* production orale/écrite ;
> 2. le type de production langagière attendue (orale ou écrite) : production à dominante descriptive/informative, narrative, argumentative ou injonctive/incitative ;
> 3. les thèmes abordés. (CFB, 2007, p. 3)

Pagnoul, former assistant at the Department of Didactics of Modern Languages and Literatures of the University of Liège, created the following figure to demonstrate the gathering of these criteria:
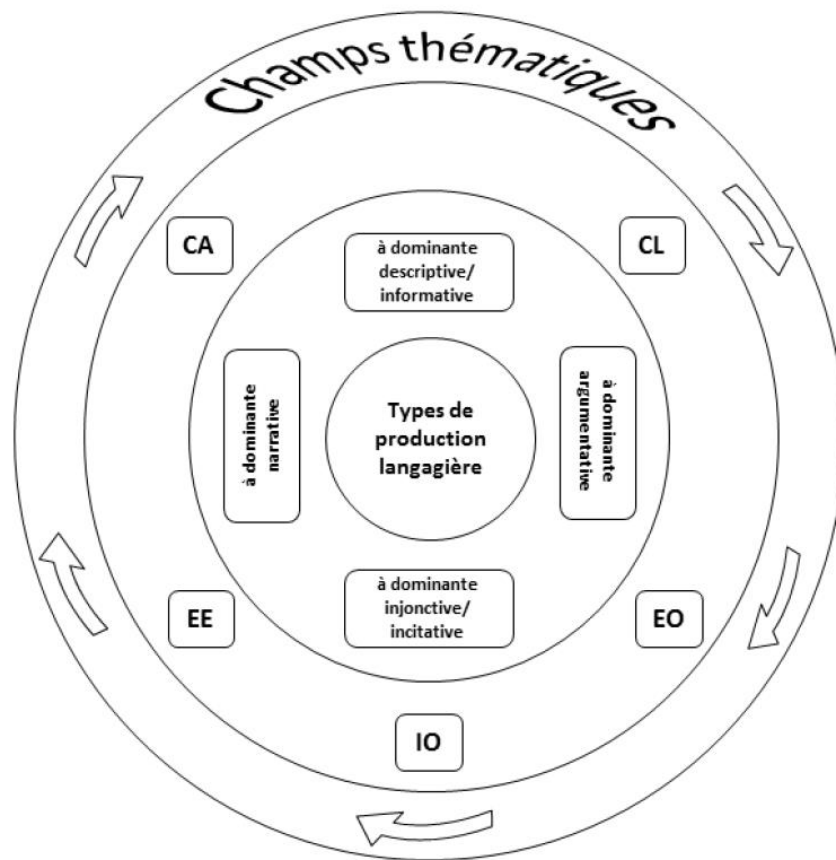


CA : compréhension à l'audition - CL : compréhension à la lecture - EE : expression écrite - EO : expression orale - IO : interaction orale

*Figure 1 - Grands regroupements des tâches en familles (taken from Simons, 2018a, p. 52)*

Moreover, according to Simons, any complex task of communication[9], whether receptive and/or productive, fits, from near or far, in a particular text genre (2018a, p. 50). Pagnoul and

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[9] A "complex task", also called *CICOF* or *type 4*, is a task that:

-is contextualised (it is proposed in a situation, a context);

-is new (it is different from the tasks already performed by the students);

-complex (it leads the student to use a whole series of things learned: grammar, vocabulary, intonation, structuring, strategies, etc.);

-is open (it gives students some freedom, for example, to choose from a document to be understood some useful information according to the situation and to express their words or structures);

-has a communicative purpose, a goal (for example, to understand the information to possibly act, interact to agree on something, solve a problem, write to convince...). (Segatto, Van Hoof, Vanhoof, & Simons, 2021-2022, n.p.)

Simons (2015) suggest rectifying the notion of *types de productions langagières*[10] and substituting it by "« macro-fonctions » ou « micro-fonctions »[11] de communication, lesquelles se matérialisent par différents genres textuels" (as cited in Simons, 2018a, p. 56). In addition, Simons uses the notion of *macro-fonctions* in order to gather the text genre in genre families. Indeed, the family metaphor can be used in order to classify text genres that share main characteristics, also called *generic invariants* (Simons, 2018a, p. 57). Text genres "rassemblent différents *types de textes* qui se distinguent par différents critères, et qui donnent naissance à différents *textes*" (Simons, 2021-2022, p. 158). Other authors, for instance, Biber and Lee, also use the term *text type*; however, they have a more restrictive definition of this notion as they define text types only from a linguistic point of view (Simons, 2018a, p. 63). For example, Biber states that "the texts in a type all share frequent use of the same set of cooccurring linguistic features" (1989, p. 6). These linguistic features represent the *internal criteria*[12] of text types.

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[10] Term used in the document *Familles de tâches en langues modernes* (2005 and 2007).

[11] Macro-function ("*macro-fonction*") of communication, also referred to as *macro-intention* and *macro communicative function*, is the main communicative function, while the *micro-functions* (also entitled *secondary macro-functions*) are secondary. An example of macro-function would be "to argue" and the micro-functions would be "to describe", "to inform", "to narrate", "to order", "to encourage", "to refute", "to concede", etc. (Renson, 2020, n.p.).

[12] Biber distinguishes between *external criteria*, which are characteristic of genres and *internal criteria*, which are characteristic of text types (Lee, 2001, p.38). See p. 4, footnote 3 for more explanation on this distinction between external and internal criteria.

This family metaphor thus establishes a kind of hierarchical model[13]:
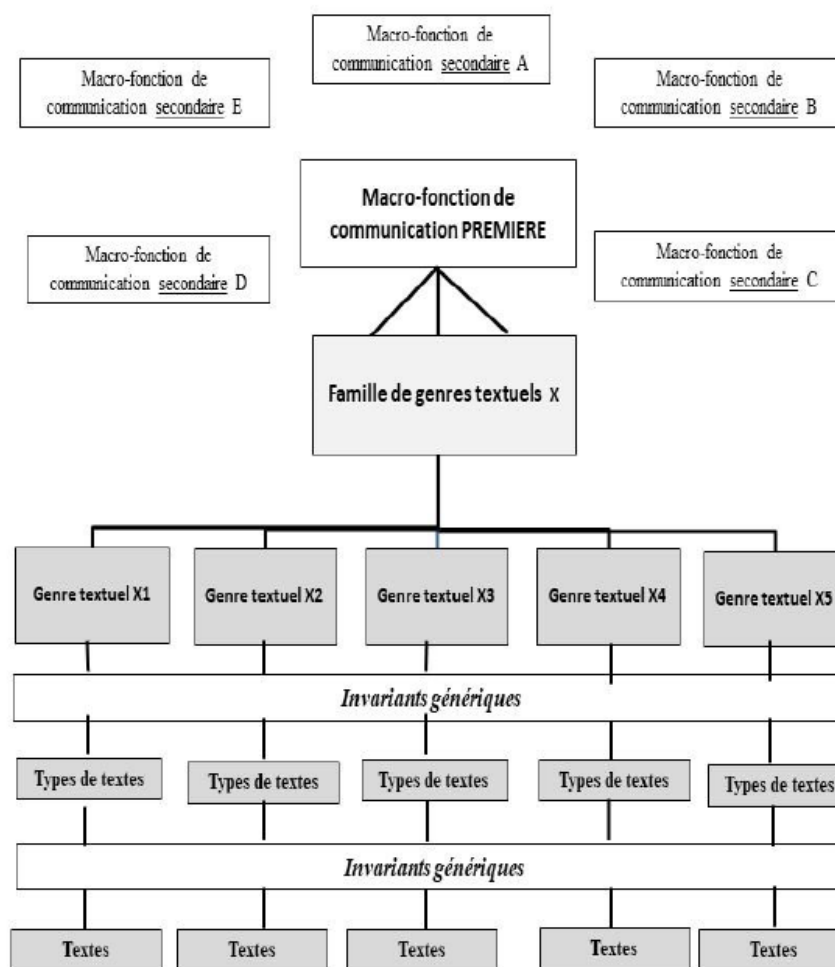


*Figure 2 - Modélisation de la relation entre « macro-fonctions de communication », « familles de genres textuels » et « genres textuels » et « types de textes » (taken from Simons, 2018a, p. 57)*

## 2.2 Learning and teaching advantages of text genres

It has been mentioned that the use of text genres matches the action-oriented approach advised by the *CEFR*, which is already a good reason to consider this method. Moreover, I think that it is worth mentioning the advantages of text genres as teaching and learning material. In the article "Le genre du texte, un outil didactique pour développer le langage oral et écrit" (2008), Dolz and Gagnon enumerate various advantages of using text genres in the foreign language classroom. They state that "[l]es textes correspondent à des situations d'interaction sociale, s'inscrivent dans un horizon social et s'adaptent à un auditoire particulier" (Dolz & Gagnon,

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[13] Note that in Simons (2018a, p. 57), the layer *textes* is not present However, it had been added by Simons in his syllabus *Didactique des langues modernes. Partim I*. University of Liège (2021-2022) on page 158. I thus decided to present the modified and more recent version of this figure.

2008, p. 186). These two authors emphasise that the text is the basic unit for teaching because it conveys two main aspects: communicational functionality and language activity (p. 186). According to them, the concept of text genre is the main element with which students construct their language skills (p. 187): "c'est au travers des genres que les pratiques langagières s'incarnent dans les activités des apprenants" (Schneuwly & Dolz, 1997, p. 29, as cited in Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 187).

Working with a text genre method will help the students understand the standard social practices as well as offer them a concrete meaning to learning (p. 187). Indeed, genre identification and representation orientate language reception or production, writing and reading strategies (p. 187).

Using text genres is also advantageous for the teacher because "[l]e genre oriente les dimensions à enseigner : les contraintes de la situation, les plans textuels, les unités linguistiques caractéristiques, les unités de sens, etc" (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 187). Moreover, Schneuwly and Dolz established two tools for text genre teaching: the *modèle didactique des genres* and the *séquence didactique* (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 188). The first model (*modèle didactique des genres*) combines the different characteristics of a text genre that the teacher can take into account when teaching text genres. This model is a kind of guide that will help the teacher to orientate the teaching of text genres:
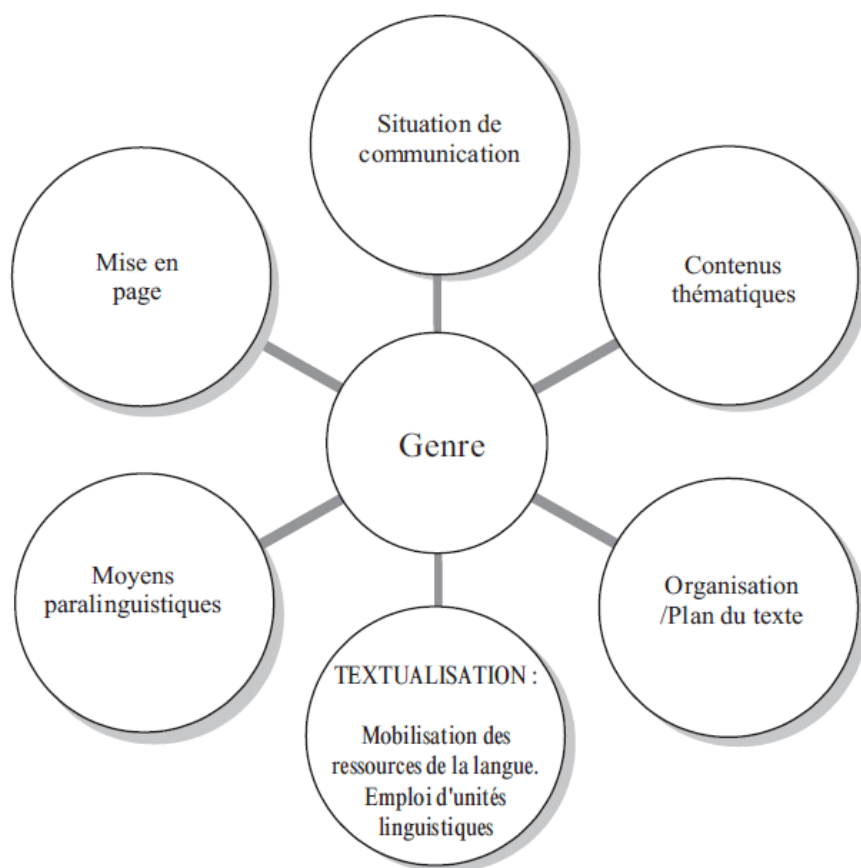
*Figure 3 - Modèle didactique du genre, les dimensions enseignables (Dolz & Schneuwly in Gagnon & Dolz, 2008)*

The second tool suggested by Dolz and Schneuwly is a didactic sequence composed of a four steps: "la mise en situation, la production initiale, les modules et la production finale" (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 189):
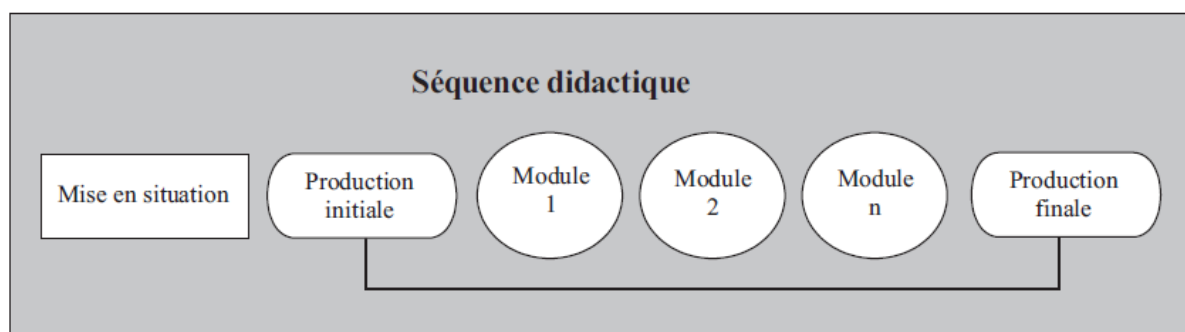


*Figure 4 - La séquence didactique (Dolz & Schneuwly in Gagnon & Dolz, 2008)*

After introducing the project to the classroom through the *mise en situation*, the aim of the second step (*production initiale*) is to discern the students' needs and difficulties through a first written production. This will help the teacher to organise the teaching of a specific text genre. Then, through different activities (*modules*), the teacher will help the students overcome the difficulties they encountered during the *production initiale*. These various activities will

deal with the four levels of the language activity: "le contexte de production, les contenus, l'organisation du texte et les unités linguistiques qui assurent la connexion et la cohésion du texte" (Dolz & Gagnon, 2008, p. 190). Then, in the fourth and last step (*production finale*), students will make a new production that reflects the integration of what they have learned through the various activities (i.e., *modules*) (p. 190).

Simons noted that this second model shares many common features with his *canevas par situation-problème*, which is based on the modern languages program of the free network (2018b, p. 226):



*Figure 5 - Méga-structure du canevas par situation-problème (Simons, 2018b, p. 228)*

As shown in Figure 5, Simons' model *canevas par situation-problème* is composed of four main steps; 1. *Mise en perspective*, 2. *État des ressources*, 3. *Apprentissage* and 4. *Réso-lution*, which all have some resonances with the four steps suggested by Dolz and Schneuwly in their *la séquence didactique* model.[14]

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[14] *Mise en perspective* is similar to Dolz and Schneuwly's *mise en situation* and *production initiale*, the learner is asked to produce a first production based on his/her knowledge. Then, *état des ressources* and *apprentissage* (Simons) equal *modules n* (Dolz & Schneuwly), the learner is going to identify, learn and work on new knowledge that was initially missing for the first production. Then, the last steps, *résolution* (Simons) and *production finale* (Dolz & Schneuwly), include a similar production to the first one, but now with the help of the new knowledge acquired.

**2.3   The press article as a text genre**

Now that the notion of text genre has been introduced, it is possible to move on to a specific text genre: the press article and answer the research question "What are the characteristics of the press article as a text genre?". I will start with the presentation of this text genre, for which I was inspired by Simons' figure on the notion of text genre (see Figure 2, p. 10). Then, I will introduce Adam's approach to the genre of the press article (1997) in order to introduce the subgenre family of the newspaper and the text types of the broadsheets and tabloids.

*2.3.1 Modelling of the press article text genre*

The press article is part of the *print media*[15] family and, more specifically, of the newspapers genre subfamily. The common dominant macro-function of this family is informing, and some of its secondary macro-functions are relating[16], explaining, describing and triggering a reaction from the reader[17]. Then, if we have a closer look at the press article genre, it can be divided into different text types: paper or online tabloid press article and paper or online broadsheet press article. These text types are categorised in terms of two elements: their version (online or paper) and the newspaper they belong to (the tabloid or the broadsheet).

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[15] I refer to the term *print media* based on the following definition and examples: "[b]roadly, any written or pictorial form of communication produced mechanically or electronically using printing, photocopying, or digital methods from which multiple copies can be made through automated processes", examples: "books, circulars, journals, lithographs, memos, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and periodicals" (*Oxford Reference,* 2022, n.p.).

[16] Note that Dolz and Schneuwly (1998 / 2009, pp. 85-87, as cited in Simons (2018a, p. 56) identify five types of groupings of genres: to expound (e.g., conference, oral presentation), to regulate behaviours (e.g., presentation of a recipe, game rules), to narrate (e.g., fable, tale), to relate (e.g., biography, TV news) and to argue (e.g., debate, teachers' conference). As demonstrates their classification, they distinguish between "narrating" and "relating". Indeed, "narrating" refers to fiction, while "relating" refers to personal experiences, news events or historical events. From Dolz and Schneuwly's theory, newspapers belong to the grouping "to relate".

[17] Indeed, some articles are not written "objectively", and the writer's subjective point of view might have an impact on the reader, making him/her react (actions or thoughts). For example, a movie review (which can be found in a newspaper) does not provide 'neutral' information to the reader and will (or not) encourage the reader to go and see the film in question (example from Geron, 2018, p. 313).

| Secondary macro-function function A: to relate | Secondary macro-function function B: to explain | Dominant communicative function: **to inform** | Secondary macro-function function C: to describe | Secondary macro-function function D: to trigger to react |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Genre family: **print media**

Genre subfamily: **newspaper**

Text genre: **press article**

| Text type: online tabloid press article | Text type: paper tabloid press articles | Text type: online broadsheet press articles | Text type: paper broadsheet press articles |
|---|---|---|---|

*Figure 6 - Modelling of the press article text genre*

### *2.3.2 Theoretical approach to the genre of the press article*

For a theoretical approach to the notion of the press article as a text genre, I suggest starting with an article written by Adam (1997): "Unités rédactionnelles et genres discursifs : cadre général pour une approche de la presse écrite". Adam points out that categorising press articles can be complex as we are confronted with two elements of classification: the genre of the article, which is generally explicit (e.g., the editorial, the report, the press review, the letters to the editor, etc.), and the section in which this article is located (e.g., politics, economics, culture, society, international matters, sports, etc.) (1997, p. 4). He pursues his analysis with what he names *unités rédactionnelles*, i.e., units that compose any kind of article. He identifies the

peritext (what surrounds the text itself)[18] of the newspaper and the peritext of the article, which are exemplified by the following table:

*Table 2 - Composantes péritextuelles des genres rédactionnels (taken from Adam, 1997, p. 5)*

| Péritexte du journal | Péritexte de l'article | + |
| | Verbal | Icono-graphique |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Nom du journal<br>2. Indication de rubrique | 3. Surtitre<br>4. Titre<br>5. Sous-titre (accroche)<br>6. Chapeau<br>7. Intertitre(s) | 8. Illustration<br>9. Légende |

In a genre-based approach to the press article, we can state, following Adam's classification, that these *composantes péritextuelles* are generic invariants of any press article.

In his article (1997), Adam refers to Mouillaud and Tétu, who consider that the "event" is the main element to classify journalistic writings.

> La maquette et le péritexte de chaque journal répartissent sémantiquement les articles en rubriques, elles-mêmes inséparables d'une classification en grandes « familles événemen-tielles » : nouvelles politiques, catastrophes (naturelles, écologiques, accidents d'avions), voyages/visites (présidentiels, ministériels, royaux, princiers, papaux), rencontres d'hommes politiques, conflits armés, conflits sociaux, décès de personnalités, manifesta-tions, etc. (Adam, 1997, p. 5)

These *familles événementielles* are a way to classify the sections of the newspaper. Then, Adam suggests that as well as considering the *unités rédactionnelles* and the *famille événemen-tielles*, it is also important to define the *générité discursive* of the *unités rédactionnelles* (p. 7). In order to do so, he refers to De Broucker[19] who distinguishes between:

> – Les genres de l'**INFORMATION : dépêche, brève, filet,** puis cinq genres dont les jour-nalistes ne sont pas la source : **communiqué, texte d'auteur(s)**, **courrier des lecteurs**, **revue de presse, information-service** ; viennent ensuite les cinq grands genres nobles de l'information : **compte rendu, reportage, enquête, interview, portrait.**
> – Les genres du **COMMENTAIRE** : commentaire explicatif, commentaire-traduction, commentaire interprétatif, commentaire expressif, « papiers d'idées » comprenant : **l'édi-torial** et **la tribune, le « papier d'expert », le « papier d'humeur »** comprenant : **le billet, la caricature, la chronique.** (Adam, 1997, p. 8)

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[18] "P. Hellwig (1982). G. Genette (1987), et Ph. Lane (1992) à sa suite, a proposé de distinguer, dans le paratexte, le *péritexte* qui entoure directement le texte proprement dit et l'*épitexte* qui circule autour du texte et comprend les commentaires, qui ne font pas partie du même ensemble matériel" (Adam, 1997, p. 5).

[19] *Pratique de l'information et écritures journalistiques* (1995).

Adam states that these categories are, in fact, *discursive positions* rather than genres (p. 9). He continues this reflection using Souchard's terminology, who speaks in terms of two *enunciative positions*:

> une forme qu'elle qualifie de « neutralisante », « où les jugements, les positions ne sont pas assumées par le discours médiatique, qui rapporte les faits » (1989, 41) et une forme « subjective » déclarée, « où le discours semble complètement assumé par le média, où le locuteur, l'énonciateur se nomme lui-même » (1989, 41). (Souchard, 1989, p. 41, as cited in Adam, 1997, p. 9)

However, Adam is well aware of the dichotomous nature of these enunciative positions and proposes keeping them instead of rejecting them completely. His recommendation is to classify texts regarding the pole towards which they tend most; the *distance-information pole* or the *implication-commentary* one (1997, pp. 10-11).

The author points out that "[a]u lieu de procéder par un raisonnement abstrait, fondé sur des ensembles bien délimités de propriétés, les catégorisations semblent fonctionner par regroupements autour de prototypes, par airs ou ressemblances de famille" (Adam, 1997, p. 12). This remark is important because it alludes to the fact that, as raised by Simons (2018a, p. 66), text genres are not fixed categories and we might sometimes face hybrid text types (e.g., the advertisements or (TV) news), which gather the generic invariants of different text genres.

Adam identifies the "[c]ritères minimaux définissant les genres de la presse écrite" (1997, p. 17) reformulating Maingueneau's criteria[20] :

*Table 3 - Critères minimaux définissant les genres de la presse écrite (taken from Adam, 1997, p. 17)*

| Critères minimaux définissant les genres de la presse écrite | |
|---|---|
| Sémantique (thématique) | (« familles événementielles » et rubriques) |
| Énonciatif | (degré de prise en charge des énoncés et identité de l'énonciateur) |
| Longueur | (brièveté *VS* développement) |
| Pragmatique | (buts, intentions communicatives) |
| Compositionnel | (plans de textes et séquences[21]) |
| Stylistique | (texture micro-linguistique[22]) |

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[20] From *Les termes clés de l'analyse de discours* (1996).

[21] "Un TEXTE est, avant tout, une unité composée de n séquences (où n est compris entre 1 séquence et un nombre n de séquences […] En d'autres termes, un Texte comporte soit une seule séquence (narrative, argumentative ou autre), soit plusieurs (n) séquences" (Adam, 1987, p. 57).

[22] *Texture micro-linguistique* refers to "la grammaire de phrase et la grammaire de texte" (Adam, 1997, p. 16).

*2.3.3 Focus on the newspaper*

The newspaper has a hyperstructure composed of different sections (e.g., culture, sport, politics, etc.) (Márová, 2014, p. 54). In addition, there are different types of press articles like the editorial, the report, the column, the investigating article, letters to the editor, the commentary article, etc. (Adam, 1997, p. 4). All of these types of articles belong to the text genre of the press article and share generic invariants. Among these generic invariants, there are the verbal peritext (composed of the headline, the subhead, the standfirst and the lead) and the iconographic peritext (pictures and caption) (Adam, 1997, p. 5). Hence, at a general level, I suggest that newspaper press articles can be compared on two parameters: the sections they belong to and the type of article they consist of (i.e., the editorial, the report, etc.). The third parameter of comparison and classification is the genre of press the press article comes from. Indeed, as briefly mentioned above, two main types of newspapers can be differentiated: *broadsheets* and *tabloids*, which are going to be developed in the next section.

*2.3.4 Focus on text types: broadsheets vs. tabloids*

From a larger and dichotomous focus, in the print media family, we can distinguish two types of newspapers: *broadsheets* (also called *qualities*) versus *tabloids* (also *red-top*[23] in British English). The online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (*OALD*) proposes the following definitions for these words:

> The broadsheet: a newspaper printed on a large size of paper, generally considered more serious than smaller newspapers. (*OALD*, 2021., n.p.)

> The tabloid: a newspaper of this size with short articles and a lot of pictures and stories about famous people, often thought of as less serious than other newspapers. (*OALD*, 2021, n.p.)

Broadsheets are considered to be informative and objective newspapers presenting "serious news", for example, *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian* or the *Independent* (Sanderson, 1999, p. 21). By contrast, tabloids are more entertaining and deal with sensational stories presenting attention-grabbing headlines and including many photographs. British examples of this type of newspaper are the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Express* (1999, p. 21). An American equivalent of the *Sun* would be *Enquirer* (Nyström, 2017, p. 6).

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[23] This expression dates from the 1990s and comes from "the red background on which the titles of certain British newspapers are printed" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.).

Another but pejorative way to refer to tabloid newspapers is to use the term *gutter press*: "the type of newspaper that pays more attention to shocking stories about crime and sex than to serious matters" (*OALD*, 2021, n.p.). A synonym of *gutter press* would be *scandal sheet*: "a newspaper or magazine that is mainly concerned with shocking stories about the immoral behaviour and private lives of famous or important people" (*OALD*, 2021, n.p.). A specific American synonym of these words is *yellow journalism* (or *yellow press*): "newspaper reports that are exaggerated and written to shock readers" (*OALD*, 2021, n.p.).

From another point of view, Bagnall states that both types of newspapers, tabloids and broadsheets, share the same purpose of telling stories (as cited in Timuçin, 2010, p. 107). However, these newspapers will not use the same strategies to narrate the same story: broadsheets aim to offer new ideas and new information every day to their readers, while tabloids want to shock (Timuçin, 2010, p. 107). "The popular paper reporter wants a story that fits the reader's conception of the world and uses a language to match" (Timuçin, 2010, p. 107).

Another way of classifying broadsheet and tabloid newspapers is to use the terms *hard* and *soft news*. Hard news is generally about politics, economics or social topics, whereas soft news tends to be about gossip, scandals and human interest stories (Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky, 2010, p. 38). Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky explain that "Patterson (2000) characterises 'soft' news as having sensationalist elements regarding famous personalities, utilitarian in nature (personally useful for the common reader), and/or based on a specific event (unconnected to any social trend or ongoing story)" (2010, p. 38).

This dichotomous categorisation of hard and soft news permits to view journalism in terms of "media production and audience research" (Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky, 2010, p. 39) as well as distinguish broadsheets from tabloid newspapers.

Lugrin (2001) makes an interesting comment saying that the tabloid press should not be judged and considered regarding its readership but rather defined by its themes and how the information is structured. Indeed, according to him, broadsheets and tabloids are compared in terms of the choice of the information they deal with and how they structure them (2001, p. 73). Along the same lines, Jouanno states that "[l]a communication populaire privilégie le récit, l'aventure, l'anecdote et le fait divers, se méfie des longs discours savants et abstraits. […] Elle cherche à distraire, à expliquer, à montrer, à émouvoir, à être utile" (as cited in Lugrin, 2001, p. 73).

In the framework of the survey[24] that I constructed for this dissertation, I decided to combine the definitions of "tabloid"[25] and "sensationalism"[26] from the *OALD* to refer to the tabloid press article:

> Un article de presse à sensation traite généralement de sujets moins sérieux[27] que ceux abordés dans les journaux d'information, tels que des histoires sur les célébrités, et cela de manière sensationnelle afin d'éveiller l'intérêt des lecteur·rices. Ces articles sont générale-ment courts et accompagnés de nombreuses photos.

In addition, broadsheets and tabloids differ in terms of their format. A broadsheet is defined as a larger paper, which dimensions are 600 x 700 mm, while the tabloid is smaller (280 x 430 mm) (Nyström, 2017, p. 6). Since the 2000s, many broadsheets began to have a tabloid format (Nyström, 2017, p. 7). This is why it is important to distinguish between broadsheets and tabloids in terms of formats and contents.[28]

## 2.4 Characteristics of the tabloid press article as a text type

The aim of this section is to provide a deeper analysis of the tabloid press article as a text type and to answer the research question "What are the characteristics of the tabloid press article?". To consider the tabloid press article as a text type, it is important to search for its generic invariants. In order to do so, this section will focus on different parameters: format and form, topics, pictures and captions, the article structure and language. I have to specify that the omission of

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[24] The survey can be found in the chapter "4. Teachers' declarative data: survey on the written press and the tabloid press article" on page 61. In addition, note that the survey was written in French (because the survey was directed and sent to teachers of foreign language, and not only to English teachers), and this is why the definition is also written in French.

[25] "a newspaper of this size with short articles and a lot of pictures and stories about famous people, often thought of as less serious than other newspapers" (*OALD*, 2021, n.p.).

[26] "a way of getting people's interest by using words that are intended to shock you or by presenting facts and events as worse or more shocking than they really are" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.).

[27] I would like to come up with some specifications regarding the term "*sérieux*". Indeed, I am aware of the fact that speaking in terms of "seriousness" is a rather subjective term. However, I do not use this adjective in a pejo-rative way but rather in order to make the definition of the press article understandable for people not coming from academic fields, as I used this definition in the survey directed to Belgian francophone foreign language teachers. Moreover, this adjective is used in dictionaries like the *OALD* to define the tabloid press.

[28] I would like to make it clear that for the purposes of this dissertation, I use the word "tabloid" in terms of the contents this newspaper deals with and not in terms of the format. In other words, I will not use the term "tabloid" to refer to the format of a broadsheet.

some characteristics[29] of the tabloid press article is intentional because they were judged too complex or irrelevant in the framework of this dissertation.

### 2.4.1 Format and form

As is the case for many newspapers, tabloid press articles have paper as well as online versions. Regarding the paper version, tabloid newspapers are generally smaller than broadsheets, their dimensions are 280 x 430 mm (Nyström, 2017, p. 6). Moreover, tabloids tend to give more space to visuals than to headlines and text (Uribe & Gunter, 2004, p. 399). Tabloids are also recognisable by their colourful and pictures-dominated front pages (Johansson, 2007, p. 87).

### 2.4.2 Topics

As mentioned in its various definitions (see pp. 18-20), the tabloid newspaper deals with soft news[30] and aims to grab the reader's interest. Among the topics of tabloid newspapers, one can find stories about crime, sex, scandals, tragedies, celebrities, gossip, tips or supernatural phenomena (Schaffer, 1995, p. 29).

### 2.4.3 Pictures and captions

In *Journalism and popular culture* (edited by Dahlgren & Sparks, 1992), Becker wrote a chapter entitled "Photojournalism and the Tabloid Press" (pp. 130-153), in which she analyses the pictures found in tabloids. Among these pictures, she distinguishes between three major categories: pictures of ordinary people, celebrities, and the news event. Ordinary people generally appear in their everyday surroundings, and celebrities are photographed behind the scenes or performing. Concerning the photographs of the news event, they tend to appear[31] as being spontaneous (pp. 140-143).

      The text that accompanies these pictures is generally "far more dramatic than the picture

---

[29] As the notion of transitivity, the notion of *implicature* (i.e., "[m]eanings that are dependent on the context of the utterance and the text, and share knowledge that may be assumed to exist between narrator and narratee" Reah, 2002, p. 116).

[30] Soft news tends to be about gossip, scandals and human interest stories (Limor & Mann, & Tuchman as cited in Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky, 2010, p.38) (see p.19).

[31] Note that Becker states that "[i]t is incorrect to think of the events themselves as unplanned, for many are scheduled and the press has mapped out strategies for covering them" (1992, p. 143).

alone" (Becker, 1992, p. 144). If we take the case of headlines, they more than likely represent this sensationalistic tone. In addition, punctuation is restricted to exclamation marks and quotation marks, which "enhance[e] both the drama and the authenticity of words" (Becker, 1992, p. 144). Regarding the pictures of ordinary people, Becker explains that the relation between pictures and their captions is more complex as the text reveals something about the person/people photographed that the picture does not show. In other words, the picture does not show any evidence of what is stated in the text: "[f]rom the photograph and the apparently contradictory text together, we have constructed a deeper 'truth'" (Becker, 1992, p. 146). Indeed, a photograph conveys the information decided by the journalist by means of the text it is accompanied by. Without its caption, a picture can be interpreted differently as the journalist imposes its version of the story, which is often sensationalised. In other words, the chosen photograph and its caption might not reflect reality but rather the journalist's message. In other words, the chosen photograph and its caption might not reflect reality but rather the journalist's message.

*2.4.4 Stylistic features: informal, spoken language, sensationalism, and humour*

In order to fulfil the tabloid press article reader's search for entertainment, the journalist establishes links with the reader. This connection between the article and the reader is mainly achieved by the style employed in the article. Indeed, in order to create this conversation with the reader, the writer uses an informal style with features of spoken language. In addition, the vocabulary used in these articles is connected to everyday life (Sparks, 1992, as cited in Conboy, 2014, p. 174).

As written by Reah: "[i]t could be argued that language is the key factor in the establishment and maintenance of social groups, of society as an entity" (2002, p. 41). In other words, the readers of the tabloid press article and the language of these articles are closely linked, and it is what creates its particularity. The writer has to create "a system of shared values" (Reah, 2002, p. 40), and this is done through the language used (2002, p. 40). Indeed, tabloids are, first and foremost, part of the cultural industry which is based on the readers' interests and tastes in order to be sold (Roy-Orenes, 2012, p. 2). For this purpose, readers are thought of as part of an "imagined community" (Johansson, 2007, p. 97).

Another stylistic characteristic of tabloid press articles is the contracted verb forms (e.g., "it's" for "it is", "don't" for "do not"), a feature pertaining to the spoken language (Hermanová, 2008, p. 31). Crystal and Davy classify contracted verb forms, onomatopoeias like "ha-ha", and exclamations like "yah" under the label of *colloquialisms* (1969, p. 188).

In addition, one of the tabloid newspapers' purposes is to sensationalise stories. "Since tabloids cannot rely on the hard-news value of their stories […] to sell copies, they must make use of other attention-grabbing devices to lure readers" (Schaffer, 1995, p. 28).

Sensationalism is a strategy that "can be operationalized in terms of certain preferred textual, pragmatic or linguistic variables" (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013, p. 174). Regarding this discursive aspect, it is important to differentiate between: a sensationalist choice of topics to be covered (e.g., scandal, crime, sex) and a sensationalising way of packaging information to make it appear more relevant or interesting (2013, p. 174)[32]. If we focus on the latter concept, sensationalising news is mainly achieved using linguistic strategies which comprise

> evaluative language; intensification and quantification; comparison, metaphor or simile; references to emotion; negative vocabulary (including collocations); story structure; references to time and place, nations and communities, individuals; inclusive 'we' and role labels; quotes from 'ordinary' citizens. (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013, p. 177)

Sensationalism is thus about emphasising certain aspects of a story using specific linguistic features to create some effect on the reader, such as suspense and curiosity (2013, p. 179).

The sensationalising tone of tabloids lies in the melodramatic representations of the news, which Brooks (1984) defines as "strong emotionalism; moral polarisation and schematisation; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue" (as cited in Johansson, 2007, p. 89). The tabloid news discourse is composed of "a theatrical textual and visual display" (Johansson, 2007, p. 90) as well as a humorous tone in order to arouse the reader's emotions. Johansson adds that "the joke[33] has developed as a key conduit for the tabloid headline, with puns, witticisms and word-games signature parts" (2007, p. 90). Jokes are also found graphically with images containing comic elements (2007, pp. 90-91) (see Appendix A, p. 112). Moreover, humour has another purpose than entertaining the reader, which is to play down the melodramatic information contained in the article, allowing the reader to distance themselves from it (Johansson, 2007, p. 92). Korte and Lechner state that

> [h]umour can be aggressive and scathing, but it may also be pleasant and entertaining. A dose of humour can make the most serious situations and subjects more bearable, as in gallows humour, and this translates to our confrontation with history. Even some of the darkest and tragic episodes of history have been presented in humorous modes: The Nazis

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[32] In the case of the tabloids, it is more than likely that there is a sensationalist choice of topics as well as a sensationalising way of packaging information.

[33] Example of a joke "[T]he Mirror used 'ROYAL FLUSH' as a headline for a story about Indian villagers arranging a special flush-toilet for Prince Charles (Nov 3, p. 10)" (Johansson, 2007, p. 91).

have been the subject of biting satire in films such as Charlie Chaplin's The Great Dictator (1940). (Korte & Lechner 2013, p. 8)

However, even if humour serves as a tool to downplay information and entertain the reader, it must be mentioned that humour sometimes borders on the outrageous. Conboy explains that "tabloids are also first to report on events which enable them to indulge in smutty jokes about body parts and functions"[34] (2006, p. 31).

### 2.4.5 Communicative functions

Regarding the communicative functions, a distinction can be made between the communicative *macro-function*, which is the main communicative function, and the *micro-functions* or *subordinate macro-functions*, which are secondary communicative functions. In the case of the tabloid press article, I would name the macro-function "to infotain"[35], because its main characteristic is to inform and entertain at the same time. Then, among the micro-functions of the tabloid press article, we find "to draw the readers' attention", "to relate", "to describe", "to explain", "to convince", or "to argue".

It is no surprise that it might happen that some of these communicative functions are mixed up with one another. According to Smirnova, the media headline has three functions, it is

> informative (it informs readers of a subject), advertising (it is aimed at drawing the audience), and graphic (actualized via non-verbal means). Graphic function could also be viewed as a means of actualizing the advertising function through size, types and coloring of font. In the case of tabloids headlines, both the informative and advertising functions are equally prominent with graphic one expanding beyond font in case of online version of periodicals (large colorful photos on the index pages, and inserted videos). (as cited in Saburova & Fedorova, 2019, p. 422)

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[34] For example: "YOU'VE GOT NO BALLS, The FA last night showed they have no balls after deciding not to charge Robert Huth with stamping on Alan Shearer's family jewels. … The Toon skipper said he had to check to make sure his tackle was still in place after referee Bob Styles overlooked the clash. (Daily Mirror, 28 April)" (Conboy, 2006, p.31).

[35] The noun "infotainment" already exists and is defined as "television programmes, etc. that present news and serious subjects in a way that entertains you" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.), but I found no occurrence of this word in order to describe the verbal action. Hence I decided to create the verb "to infotain". Note that, if we consider the broadsheet, the main communicative function is "to inform".

*2.4.6 Article structure*

A press article, whether it comes from a broadsheet newspaper, or a tabloid one, is surrounded by a verbal peritext (subhead, headline, subtitle, standfirst[36], byline[37]) and an iconographic peritext (picture, caption). The article itself is composed of the intro[38], the body and the ending.

A news article generally follows what is called the *inverted pyramid* model, which means that the most important information is at the top of the article and the least important is at the bottom (Keeble, 1994, p. 273). The most important information is found in what is called the *lead*[39] *sentence*, which answers the five questions: who, where, when, what and why? (Pöttker, 2013, p. 502). "The information presented after the lead sentence appears in decreasing order of relevance and with an increase in quantity. The details considered least relevant appear at the end" (Pöttker, 2013, p. 502).

*2.4.7 Newspaper language: journalese*

For the purpose of this section on the tabloid press article's characteristics, it is important to introduce a specific term which is *journalese*, defined as "a style of language that is thought to be typical of that used in newspapers" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.). Zinsser wrote that journalese is:

> a quilt of instant words patched together out of other parts of speech. Adjectives are used as nouns ('greats', 'notables'). Nouns are used as verbs ('to host'), or they are chopped off to form verbs ('enthuse', 'emote'), or they are padded to form verbs ('beef up', 'put teeth into'). This is a world where eminent people are 'fame' and their associates are 'staffers', where the future is always 'upcoming' and someone is forever 'firing off' a note. (Zinsser, 2006, as cited in Nordquist, 2020).

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[36] "text intended to be read between headline and story which can elaborate on point made in headline, add new one or raise questions which will be answered in story (a teaser). Sometimes contains *byline*. Helps provide reader with a 'guiding hand' into reading large slice of copy – thus mainly used for features and occasionally long news stories. Also known as the 'sell'" (Keeble, 1994, p. 278).

[37] "gives name of journalist(s) who have written article. Otherwise known as credit line. Subs sometimes call it blame line. When appears at end of story known as *sign-off*" (Keeble, 1994, p. 268).

[38] "The intro (known in the US as the lead or the nose and in France as the *attaque*) is the most important part since it has to draw the reader into the story by creating a sense of urgency and exciting their interest. It should highlight the main theme or angle of the story and set the tone" (Keeble, 1994, p. 111).

[39] Note that *lead* is the US equivalent of *intro*.

Among the characteristics of journalese, we find *stock phrases*[40] (e.g., "bored housewife", "devout Catholic", "distinguished surgeon", "grieving widow")[41] which depict clichés easily identifiable by the reader. Humour is another feature of journalese, for example, "when they face problems, teachers get *caned*, cooks *are browned off*, doctors might be *sickened*, butchers might be *beefing* about something, or *giving it the chop*" (McArthur, 2016, n.p.). In addition, journalists make special use of words; for example:

- nouns are used as verbs (e.g., "to engineer", "to surge");
- attributives, nouns are used to qualify other nouns (e.g., "death ride", "rescue team");
- reduplications, "[s]uch coinages often rhyme, lodge easily in the memory, and sometimes become catch-phrases" (McArthur, 2016, n.p.) (e.g., "the brain drain", "culture vulture");
- archaisms which are used because they are short or popular (e.g., "agog", "foe", "hustings");
- neologisms (e.g., "new-look", "see-through", "lookalike").[42]

It is interesting to note that some neologisms that first appeared in newspapers are now part of common language usage, like the phrases "mad cow disease" or "test-tube baby" *(*McArthur, 2016, n.p.).

### 2.4.8 Linguistic features

In order to list the lexical characteristics of the tabloid article, I will mainly use Li, Zhang and Du's article, "A Case Analysis of Lexical Features in English Broadsheets and Tabloids" (2014), which compares broadsheets and tabloids' lexical features. In their comparative analysis, they focus on five categories: *compound words*, *fuzzy words*, numbers, proper nouns, and *vivid words*.

*Compound words* are created by the combination of two or more roots, which is a creative and limitless process. In English, compound words are generally found in three major categories: nouns (e.g., "poorhouse", "handbook")[43], verbs (e.g., "overturn", "dryclean") and

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[40] Defined as "[a] well-known, overused phrase; a cliché" (*Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*, 2015, n.p.).

[41] Examples from McArthur (2016, n.p.).

[42] Note that all these examples come from *(*McArthur, 2016, n.p.).

[43] Note that these examples come from Li, Zhang and Du, 2014, p. 117.

adjectives (e.g., "easygoing", "taxfree"). The purpose of these words "is mainly to create more accuracy when reporting facts" (Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 117). Indeed, using compound words is a way to use only one specific word as it gets the meaning of its components. Besides, using compound nouns might also be space-saving as journalists are limited by a word count when they write an article. I have to specify that Li, Zhang and Du's analysis shows that compound words are used without any specific difference in both broadsheets and tabloids. I thus consider that they represent one of the tabloid press article's lexical features.

Another type of word the authors look at is *fuzzy words*[44]. They explain that fuzzy words are used for their vagueness in order to avoid controversy and to be more acceptable to the public. Zadeh even adds that the use of fuzzy words is a flexible and protective way for news writers to express themselves (as cited in Li, Zhang & Du 2014, p. 117). Li, Zhang and Du propose to divide fuzzy words into three categories: abstract nouns (e.g., "democracy", "love"), numerals (e.g., "hundreds of"), and hedges with fuzzy meanings (e.g., "about", "to some extent") (2014, p. 188). According to the article, these types of words are slightly more used in broadsheets than in tabloids. As a consequence, I will not consider fuzzy words as a lexical characteristic of the tabloid article.

Regarding numbers, the article shows an interesting fact: they are more present in tabloids than in broadsheets. Usually, numbers are a sign of reliability, but in the case of the tabloid, they are used with an eye-catching purpose because they represent "direct, concrete and convincing" (Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 121) information.

Then, Li, Zhang and Du conclude that there is no significant difference between broadsheets and tabloids in the use of proper nouns (2014, p. 119). This might be explained by the fact that apart from using nicknames or appositional naming expressions, there is no other way to refer to proper names, which leaves no other option for journalists to use them.

However, another type of word can be discussed as they are present in tabloids: vivid words. Sevareid said: "[o]ne good word is worth a thousand pictures" (as cited in Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 120). Vivid words aim at "arous[ing] the readers' enthusiasm, and creat[ing] appealing stories" (Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 120). Here are some examples of these vivid words: "shock wave" for "powerful influence" or "wedding" for "close association or union" (examples from Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 120). Crystal and Davy agree on this and comment that

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[44] Note that Li, Zhang and Du refer to *fuzzy words* using Zadeh's terminology (1995): "Zadeh (1965) proposed the concept of the vagueness of language in his book *Fuzzy Sets*. He argued that if an expression lacks accurate boundary to its opposite, the expression is defined as 'fuzzy language'. Fuzzy language is ambiguous" (Li, Zhang & Du, 2014, p. 177).

extreme or absolute words are used with a deliberately emphatic effect (e.g., "big black", "vanished", "downpour") (1969, p. 188).

In addition to the characteristics found by Li, Zhang and Du (2014), Conboy mentions another type of lexical feature, which is the use of colloquial expressions and slang (2014, p. 177). Also, he states that familiar names and nicknames are characteristic of tabloids as they connect the reader to the outside world, establishing some kind of familiarity between them (2014, p. 176). Indeed, Fowler says that they are "used to connote the informality and intimacy of face-to-face discourse" (1991, p. 63).

### 2.4.9 Tabloids headlines

In her article, "Shocking secrets revealed! The Language of Tabloid Headlines" (1995), Schaffer gathered a database of four American tabloid newspapers (the *National Enquirer*, the *Star*, the *National Examiner*, and the *Globe*) for nine weeks (which represents an analysis of 212 magazines in total) in order to analyse their headlines.

According to the author, the purpose of tabloid headlines is to grab the reader's attention by means of

> [c]ontent- rich vocabulary - words that get the attention of the reader either through reference to a particularly interesting topic (e.g., "romance," "divorce," "sex," "scandal," etc.) or through evoking powerful, often emotional connotations (e.g., "weird," "sizzling," "stripped," etc.) - a device also common in advertising. (Schaffer, 1995, p. 28)

Indeed, it has to be mentioned that tabloid newspapers are first and foremost commercial products and are meant to be sold. As a consequence, their headlines have to be semantically and graphically eye-catching and often "occupy more space than the whole article they refer to" (Reah, 2002, p. 23).

Schaffer's analysis also shows that another type of vocabulary is used in tabloid headlines, which is emotive language for the purpose of arousing the reader's curiosity and interest (1995, p. 30). In addition, she also finds "what Madelon Heatherington has called labels of primary potency" (Schaffer, 1995, p. 31):

> [t]hese words are adjectives which categorize and even stereotype people in certain ways (usually according to racial, ethnic or religious group; gender; etc.) and so tend to overshadow the nouns they modify (e.g., what is significant to the users of the phrase "black female lawyer" is not so much the profession of the individual as her race and gender). (Schaffer, 1995, p. 31)

Another characteristic of tabloid headlines is using the first name of celebrities or referring to them using nicknames, which creates a bond between the reader and the cited celebrity as if they knew each other personally (pp. 31-32).

Tabloid newspapers headlines create this closeness with the reader when they consist of *pseudo-quotes*, i.e., statements that are used like direct quotes and which depict the supposed quoted person's attitude without being verbatim reports, as they lack quotation marks or any mark of reported speech (p. 32).

The last feature found by Schaffer is the presence of literary or poetic devices which will make the headline more memorable or purely interesting on the level of pronunciation. Among these devices, we find alliteration[45], rhyme[46], and assonance[47].

### 2.4.10 Generic identity card of the tabloid article as a text type

As a conclusion of Section 2.4 on the characteristics of the tabloid press article as a text type, I suggest using a chart displaying its generic invariants:

*Table 4 - Generic identity card of the tabloid article as a text type*

| Form and format | • Paper or online version<br>• Importance given to visuals rather than text |
|---|---|
| Topics | • Soft news<br>• Sensationalist themes |
| Pictures and captions | Pictures of ordinary people, celebrities, news event are accompanied by a caption that defines the interpretation of the picture according to the information that the journalist wants to convey. |

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[45] Defined as "the use of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words that are close together, as in *sing a song of sixpence*" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.). For example: "*F*irst *Ph*otos of *F*ergie's baby" (Nat. Ex., 7/26/88)[45], "*B*rave Lucy *B*ounces *B*ack from Stroke…" (Nat. Ex., 7/26/88) (Schaffer, 1995, p.33).

[46] For example: "Willie Nelson's *Gal Pal* Pregnant…" (Nat. Enq., 8/2/88), "*Tubby Hubby* Divorces Wife…" (Nat. Ex., 8/2/88) (Schaffer, 1995, p.33).

[47] Defined as "the effect created when two syllables in words that are close together have the same vowel sound, but different consonants, or the same consonants but different vowels, for example, *sonnet* and *porridge* or *cold* and *killed*" (*OALD*, 2022, n.p.). For example: "The R*ea*l R*ea*son Wives Nag" (Nat. Enq., 8/9/88), "Bingo-M*a*d Gr*a*ndmother Runs off with Boy, 14: 'That's my lucky number' says g*a*mbling gr*a*nny" (Nat. Ex., 8/9/88) (Schaffer, 1995, p.33).

| Style | • Informal |
|---|---|
| | • Spoken language |
| | • Sensationalism |
| | • Humour |
| **Communicative functions** | • Primary communicative function: to *infotain* |
| | • Secondary communicative functions: to draw the readers' attention, to relate, to describe, to convince, to argue |
| **Article structure** | • Verbal peritext |
| | • Iconographic peritext |
| | • Intro, body, and ending |
| | • Inverted pyramid |
| **Linguistic features** | • Journalese |
| | • Compound words, numbers, colloquial expressions, slang, familiar names and nicknames |
| **Headlines**[48] | • Emotive vocabulary |
| | • Eye-catching (by means of the vocabulary chosen and the space given to the headline) |
| | • Labels of primary potency (stereotypes) |
| | • Pseudo-quotes |
| | • Poetic devices: alliteration, rhyme, assonance |

## 2.5  Interests of the tabloid press article[49] for teaching and learning English

I know that the tabloid press conveys negative connotations and is "considered by many to be the 'dark planet' of contemporary journalism" (Dubied & Hanitzsch, 2014, p. 137). It is also criticised because of the matters it deals with, spreading gossip about celebrities' private life, for example. However, in this section, my goal is to answer one of my research questions:

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[48] I think that some of the characteristics of headlines, and more specifically emotive vocabulary, *labels of primary potency* and *pseudo-quotes*, are characteristics that are not restricted to headlines and might also be found in the tabloid press article.

[49] Note that some of the interests mentioned in this section are valid for the press article in general. Therefore, I decided to present them as the tabloid press article is a press article and thus share some of the main characteristics of the press articles.

"What are the advantages of using tabloid press articles for English teaching and learning?".
The interests of the tabloid press article will be developed from different angles: the development of the student's critical thinking, motivation, language and culture.

### 2.5.1 Linguistic aspects

Newspapers reflect language change and are "linguistically topical and up-to-date, and provide valuable linguistic data" (Sanderson, 1999, p. 2). This way, the newspaper is used to learn and practise grammatical structures, idioms and phrases (Mittal, 2014, p. 690).

An advantage of newspapers is that they provide a wider variety of text types (e.g., the report, the interview) and language styles, two elements textbooks cannot readily supply. Moreover, the newspaper presents varieties of English to the learner (Sanderson, 1999, pp. 2-3). The press article also confronts the learner with different communication intentions such as informing, describing, convincing, etc. Additionally, press articles provide the learner with an actual communicational situation: the authentic[50] press article has been written by a real journalist for a real reader. In contrast to the texts provided by textbooks, an authentic press article is not created for didactic purposes. Also, the tabloid press article has this particularity of having a familiar tone to create a connexion with its reader. This familiarity might be motivating for the learner as the text does not distance itself from the reader.

Regarding language, the tabloid press article is a great source for learning new vocabulary. Indeed, the tabloid press article is characterised by its emotive language, use of spoken and colloquial language, humour and poetic devices like alliteration, rhyme, and assonance (see examples on p. 29). Spoken and colloquial languages share the particularity of reflecting actual language uses, a type of language that might not be found in textbooks. Moreover, teaching spoken and colloquial languages to students can be an entry point to discuss register differences[51]. Being aware of these registers is also a way for the learners to act as social agents, as suggested by the action-oriented approach of the *CEFR*. Then, helping students to understand

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[50] Authentic texts are "those written and oral communications produced by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group" (Galloway, 1998, p. 133, as cited in Atkin Kroek, 2015, p. 24).

[51] The *CEFR* distinguishes between different registers: "frozen, e.g. *Pray silence for His Worship the Mayor!*, formal, e.g. *May we now come to order, please,* neutral, e.g. *Shall we begin?*, informal, e.g. *Right. What about making a start?*, familiar, e.g. *O.K. Let's get going.*, intimate, e.g. *Ready dear?*" (2018, p. 120). Note that the learning of these registers varies concerning the learners' level.

humour through these articles also meets this approach. Indeed, in order to be a social agent and "to successfully participate in a variety of speech acts" (Harakchiyska & Borisova, 2020, p. 771), it is interesting and beneficial for the learners to be taught about this pragmatic use of the foreign language. Additionally, learning about humour in the foreign language classroom will help the learners to understand and know more about a specific culture (Harakchiyska & Borisova, 2020, p. 771). Besides, alliteration, rhyme and assonance are helpful devices for working the learners' pronunciation and creative use of language.

### 2.5.2 Culture

Using the press article is a way to develop the students' cultural knowledge. The foreign language is thus the tool through which the students learn new information. Moreover, there is an underlying idea in the relationship between culture and language: there are interlinked. Indeed, newspapers reflect "culture through the language they contain" (Sanderson, 1999, p. 2). Firstly, language is used to make cultural references to a specific community's places, customs, people, and, secondly, language reflects cultural associations of words of this specific community. There is an interaction between language and culture which will help the learner know more about the sociocultural aspect of a language (1999, p. 2). Indeed, in the case of the tabloid, even if the information is communicated sensationally, this does not prevent the articles from being a starting point for learning about the culture.[52]

Tezcan (2008) underlines the importance of this connection between language and culture and raises the point that

> [f]rom a sociolinguistic perspective, competence in language use is determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use language appropriate to particular contexts. (Tsenk, 2002). Thus, successful language learning requires language users to know the culture that underlies language. (Tezcan, 2008, p. 3)

Kavakli (2020) mentions the notion of *linguaculture* in order to name this connexion between language and culture. She adds that

> [t]his taxonomy provides a conceptualization of language and culture in a multidimensional and undivided way. The focus is on cultural differences that influence interactions;

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[52] For example, in its online version, the English tabloid *The Sun* has a special section dedicated to The Queen: "The Queen - Latest news and stories" (https://www.thesun.co.uk/who/the-queen/). Articles from this section can be used to introduce the theme of the English Royal Family.

therefore, linguaculture learning provides a deep-seated procedure of constant modification and regulation of linguistic ability and intercultural awareness. (Kavakli, 2020, p. 89)

*2.5.3 Motivation*

The fact that newspapers can be about many subjects and real-life events is crucial in arousing the learners' curiosity and motivation to learn English (Sanderson, 1999, p. 3). Fountoupoulou even adds that the fact that newspapers are real-life artefacts is essential because learners will establish links between what they are learning and everyday issues (2008, p. 118).

Moreover, students do not read the press anymore, they read texts circulating on social networks such as Facebook posts, Instagram stories, and TikToks. Therefore, in an optimistic way of thinking, including the news article in the classroom might motivate students to read outside the classroom. The aim is to encourage them to read and maybe to convert it into a pleasurable activity.

In addition, press articles are part of popular culture[53] as they come from a broadsheet or tabloid newspaper. Popular culture in the classroom establishes links between the teacher and the students as they are all surrounded by it. Furthermore, it is possible to make connections between popular culture texts and canonical texts (Thomas & Page, 2012, p. 129). "Providing popular culture texts in the classroom allows students the opportunity to analyse rhetorical strategies, make thematic connections, examine allusions, develop background knowledge, and question race, class, and gender issues" (Thomas & Page, 2012, p. 130). Using popular culture texts (e.g., song lyrics, comics, print advertisements) will provide the students with tools they can use in their everyday lives. However, to learn and approach this material, students will need to be guided by the teacher because they are not always able to evaluate and question the information they are reading (2012, p. 131). Moreover, these texts depend on several factors, such as the social, writing and rhetoric contexts, which the students might have difficulties analysing (2012, p. 131). This is why considering these texts within a generic approach will help students to understand all the particularities of the texts they are confronted with. Furthermore, popular culture is authentic, does not come from textbooks, and is generally familiar to students, which can be a source of motivation. If the learning material arouses the students' interest, their

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[53] In this section, I refer to *popular culture* using the definition provided by Kidd: "Popular culture is the set of practices, beliefs, and objects that embody the most broadly shared meanings of a social system. It includes media objects, entertainment and leisure, fashion and trends, and linguistic conventions, among other things. Popular culture is usually associated with either mass culture or folk culture and differentiated from high culture and various institutional cultures (political culture, educational culture, legal culture, etc.)" (2021, n.p.).

"attention can be organised through desire rather than coercion" (Cheung, 2001, p. 58). The fact that tabloid articles tend to be about soft news might motivate the students as the topics they cover are not complicated (such as politics, for example) and perhaps familiar. In addition, these articles are generally shorter and contain a lot of pictures, which might facilitate the comprehension of the article and motivate the students.

*2.5.4 Development of the student's critical thinking*

Newspapers are a source of information and enable us to develop our general knowledge about the world; they have an educational value. Sanderson adds that "[a]s language teachers, we are also educators. [...] [T]his means that we are also responsible for the development and general education of our students" (1999, p. 2). This educational value of the newspaper article is clearly mentioned in point 3 of the priority missions of education stated in the Décret *Missions*: "préparer tous les élèves à être des citoyens responsables, capables de contribuer au développement d'une société démocratique, solidaire, pluraliste et ouverte aux autres cultures" (CFB, 2018, p. 5).

Nowadays, with technology, the advancement of means of communication, social media and the Internet, mass media has become a kind of "parallel school" or "second educator"[54]. Students are influenced in many ways by all the information they read in mass media. "From YouTube to blogs, information is being circulated without filtering and verification" (Lee, 2010, p. 2), and this is why media education steps in. This thinking about the relationship between education and media is not new and had already been discussed in the Grünwald declaration[55] in 1982, which invites teachers to promote and develop students' critical thinking:

> Il ne faut pas sous-estimer ni le rôle de la communication et de ses média dans le processus de développement ni la fonction instrumentale qu'exercent les média pour favoriser la participation active des citoyens dans la société. Les systèmes politiques et éducatifs doivent assumer les obligations qui leur reviennent pour promouvoir chez les citoyens une compréhension critique des phénomènes de communication. (UNESCO, 1982, n.p.)

In 2008, the WBF created the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation aux médias* (CSEM) and published a decree in which media education is defined as "l'éducation visant à donner la

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[54] Jospin, 1992; Roncagliolo, 1992; Schaeffer, 1984 cited in Lee, 2010, p. 2.

[55] Recognising the importance of improving the relationship between education and communication in our society, educators, communicators and researchers from 19 countries participated in an international symposium in Grünwald, Germany, from 18 to 22 January 1982, at the invitation of UNESCO, adopted this declaration (Schretter, 2011, n.p.).

capacité à accéder aux médias, à comprendre et apprécier, avec un sens critique, les différents aspects des médias et de leur contenu et à communiquer dans divers contextes" (CFB, 2008, p.1).

Moreover, the reference document *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis à l'issue des humanités générales et technologiques, langues modernes* (2017) suggests the teaching of critical reading of the media, as mentioned in the following passage: "[c]omme pour la dimension socioculturelle, la citoyenneté (utilisation critique des médias, développement durable, respect de l'environnement…) sera intégrée aussi souvent que possible aux activités par le biais des documents proposés et des thématiques abordées" (CFB, 2017, p. 12).

The quotations mentioned above highlight the need for media education, which is, I think, an interesting idea to keep in mind for the teaching of the (tabloid) press article, as it is a production coming from the media. Besides, in the education of Francophone Belgium, there is no specific media education course, which means that media education is a matter of all disciplines, including the foreign language course. This idea of media education is closely related to the idea of critical thinking, a concept to which I refer using the *OALD*, which defines it as "the process of analysing information to make a logical decision about the extent to which you believe something to be true or false" (2022, n.p.). In the foreign language class, the reading skills result in an interaction between the text and the reader in which the teacher has the role of a guide (Márová, 2014, p. 16) who helps the students to develop active reading, which involves a certain critical distance from the text (2014, p. 25).

One might wonder how acquiring and working on critical thinking is beneficial through and for learning English. Using critical thinking in a foreign language makes the language meaningful for the students (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011, p. 112). Indeed, using English for critical thinking shows the students that they do not just learn the foreign language, they learn it as a tool to share their reflections. In other words, we "distinguish between the language as a communicative vehicle in everyday situations and the use of the language beyond the survival level" (Vdovina & Cardozo Gaibisso, 2013, pp. 56-57). Critical thinking is a unique ability that is independent of other skills and results from different cognitive skills and sub-skills:

| Skills | Sub-skills |
|---|---|
| 1. Interpretation | categorization, decoding significance, clarifying meaning |
| 2. Analysis | examining ideas, identifying arguments, analyzing arguments |
| 3. Evaluation | assessing claims, assessing arguments |
| 4. Inference | querying evidence, conjecturing alternatives, drawing conclusions |
| 5. Explanation | stating results, justifying procedures, presenting arguments |
| 6. Self-regulation | self-examination, self-correction |

Considering these skills in the scope of the English classroom, the learner will learn to apply all the sub-skills mentioned. In order to do so, the learner will learn how "to explain, reason, argue, and also to express the reasoning process" (Zare, 2015, p. 249). In addition to learning and developing these skills, the student will also learn to use metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and checking outcomes (Zare, 2015, p. 250). Vdovina and Cardozo Gaibisso state that

> [e]ngaged in the interactive activities while practicing both communicative skills and critical thinking, students have a better chance to improve their self-consciousness, their understanding of their abilities and of their limits and thus paving the road to self-improvement as learners, as future professionals, and as individuals. (Vdovina & Cardozo Gaibisso 2013, p. 58)

As Cussol and Boyer note, the media fascinates teenagers, especially when it comes to spectacular and dramatic information (2008, p. 54). Reading the press article critically would be a manner to distance oneself from the emotions provoked by the news and introduce the article in a pedagogical situation in which there will be some objective observations guided by the teacher (2008, p. 54). This kind of reading can be defined as an *anti-stereotype* where the reader questions and judges: "la distanciation critique, c'est d'abord ne pas croire" (Cussol & Boyer, 2008, p. 55). The aim is not to be suspicious but rather to develop an active curiosity that will help the learners be more responsible for themselves and what surrounds them (2008, p. 55).

Recently, the WBF presented a new project, "Ouvrir mon quotidien numérique", organised by the Alliance des médias d'information (LaPRESSE.be) and the CSEM[56], which aims at using and reading the digital press in order to develop the students' critical mind and for active

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[56] Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation aux Médias

citizenship education. I think that the elaboration of this kind of project proves that the press, and thus the press article, is an interesting and helpful material for teaching the development of critical thinking skills and media education.

Tabloid articles are the perfect material for learning about media education and critical thinking as they are known for their sensationalising tone. Indeed, this sensationalistic effect is achieved by eye-catching headlines and pictures, and specific word choices (i.e., emotive, spoken and colloquial language, etc., see Section 2.4 p. 20). Tabloid articles' sensationalism is a construction that must be deconstructed in order to make students aware of media discourse. In addition, tabloids tend to contain gender, social and ethnic stereotypes[57], which must be analysed and discussed with the students.

### 2.5.5 Conclusion

In this section, I answered the research question "What are the advantages of using tabloid press articles for English teaching and learning?". The tabloid press article is interesting and beneficial in the learning of English, not only for its language but also for developing the student's critical thinking and motivation, for introducing the study of culture, as well as working on media education and critical thinking. My conclusion would be that unconventional teaching and learning material like the tabloid press article might have potential interests in the learning of English, despite the generally negative opinion on this press.

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[57] For example, Reah states that "[t]here is a tendency to depict [women] as existing primarily in relation to their families – their children, their husbands or partners rather than as individuals in their own right. Women are frequently described in relation to their physical appearance. Women are often depicted as weaker – they are victims, they are on the receiving end of action rather than the performers of it" (2002, p.67).

## 3.    The (tabloid) press article : legal requirements and textbooks

This chapter aims at answering two main questions:

1) Does the notion of the press article appear in the legal requirements of the WBF and the *CEFR*?;
2) Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles?

These two issues will be addressed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, respectively. In addition, Section 3.1 will first deal with the notion of the text genre in the legal requirements of the WBF before presenting research on the specific text genre of the press article.

### 3.1    The press article in the legal requirements of the WBF and the *CEFR*

Before presenting analyses of the legal requirements of the WBF, it is essential to say a few words about the Francophone school system in Belgium. Indeed, the Francophone school system in Belgium is divided into three networks, and this division impacts the educational documents. These three networks are the *Wallonie Bruxelles Enseignement* (WBE), the *réseau officiel subventionné* (subsidised public school network) and the *réseau libre subventionné* (free subsidised school network)[58].

Regarding the legal requirements, these three networks are ruled by a common reference document: *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis - humanités générales et technologiques - langues modernes* (2017)[59]. This document aims to ensure the coherence and progression of learning and facilitate planning by teams of teachers (WBF, n.p., 2017). In order to do so, this reference document is divided into *unités d'acquis d'apprentissage* (UAA), defined as a coherent set of learning outcomes that are likely to be assessed (WBF, n.p., 2017). Moreover, these UAA indicate the expected level for each skill[60] and each step of the learning process (n.p., 2017):

- Description des attendus nécessaires à la maitrise du niveau ;

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[58] From D. Lafontaine, 2020-2021, p.38.

[59] Note that this document targets the second and the third degrees of secondary education (from third to sixth years). The other document, *Les Socles de compétences – langues modernes* (2017) targets primary education and the first degree of secondary education. As my Master degree prepares me to teach to the second and third degrees, I will focus on the document *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis - humanités générales et technologiques - langues modernes* (2017).

[60] The five main skills are: writing, listening, speaking with or without interaction and reading (CFB, 2017, n.p.).

- Caractéristiques de la production de l'élève ou du document de compréhension au niveau attendu ;
- Description des attendus pour chacun des processus d'apprentissage ;
- Liste des différents - savoirs - savoir-faire - stratégies (CECRL, chapitre 4) à installer pour développer la compétence visée au niveau attendu ;
- Stratégies ne relevant pas spécifiquement des langues modernes et pouvant être aussi développées et / ou utiles dans d'autres disciplines. (WBF, n.p., 2017)

Then, apart from the reference document, two different curricula are distinguished[61]: *Langues modernes. 2ᵉ et 3ᵉ degrés. Général de transition* (2018) for the free subsidised school network, and *Programme d'études langues modernes 2ᵉ et 3ᵉ degrés des humanités générales et technologiques* (2020) for the subsidised public school network and WBE. The reference document gathers the material that has to be seen and the curricula suggest methods about how to deal with this material.

### 3.1.1 Text genre in the legal requirements of the WBF (until and after 2000)

This section is based on "Place et conceptualisation des genres textuels et types de textes dans les prescrits légaux en FWB et dans le CECRL" (Simons, 2018a, pp. 40-46). If we have a look at the legal requirements of the WBF (curricula and reference document) until 2000[62], there are only five occurrences of the term *genre (textuel)*[63] on a total of 364 pages (p. 40). However, Simons found that there were 54 occurrences of *type de texte / de production langagière* in these documents, which is nearly eleven times more than the occurrences of *genre (textuel)* (2018a, p. 40). In addition, none of these occurrences is accompanied by a definition. Regarding this observation, Simons makes the assumption that

> [i]l est possible que cette absence de définition reflète aussi l'état de la recherche dans ce domaine qui propose des conceptualisations et donc des définitions des termes « genre textuel » et « type de texte » (très) différentes selon les cultures de recherche. (Simons, 2018a, p. 41)

As a summary, here is a chart displaying the occurrences of the notions of "text genres" and "type of texts / types of (language) production" in the legal requirements of the WBF:

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[61] Note that these curricula are specific to general education and the second and third degrees.

[62] Note that these documents have new versions and that the ones analysed by Simons are the previous ones, i.e., until 2000.

[63] Note that Simons made this research in French, as the documents are written in this language.

*Table 6 - The notions of* text genre *in the legal requirements of the WBF (taken from Simons, 2018a, pp. 40-41)*

|  | *Genres textuels* | *Types de textes / types de productions (langagière)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Socles de compétences en langues modernes* (1999b) (9 pages) | / | / |
| *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis en langues modernes* (1999a) (11 pages) | / | 6 x |
| *Programme de langues germaniques de la Communauté française* (2000b) (234 pages) | 1 x | 17 x |
| *Programme de langues romanes – espagnol / italien – de la Communauté française* (2000a) (40 pages) | 3 x | 17 x |
| *Programme de langue moderne de l'enseignement Libre* (2000) (70 pages) | 1 x | 14 x |
| Total : 364 pages | 5 | 54 |

*3.1.2 Text genre in the CEFR*

The *CEFR* has influenced European educational policies since its publication in 2001, especially with the integration of its language levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) in textbooks, legal requirements and evaluation tools among others (Simons, 2018a, p. 42).

As for the legal requirements of the WBF, Simons looked for the occurrences of the notions of *genre (textuel)* and *type de texte / de production langagière* in the *CEFR*. The result is that there are 14 occurrences of *genre (textuel)* and 42 of *type de texte / de production langagière* on a total of 192 pages (2018a, p. 43). His analysis highlights that there is no definition related to these occurrences and that there are fewer occurrences of *genre (textuel)* than *type de texte / de production langagière* (2018a, p. 43).

However, a small precision can be made regarding the occurrences of *genre (textuel)*. Indeed, Simons noticed that of the 14 occurrences, 9 are associated with the term *types* (2018a, p. 43). According to the authors of the *CEFR*, *genres* and *types textuels* have to do with pragmatic skills. In addition, the notions of "texts", "text types" and "genres" have an englobing/englobed relationship as modelled by the following figure:
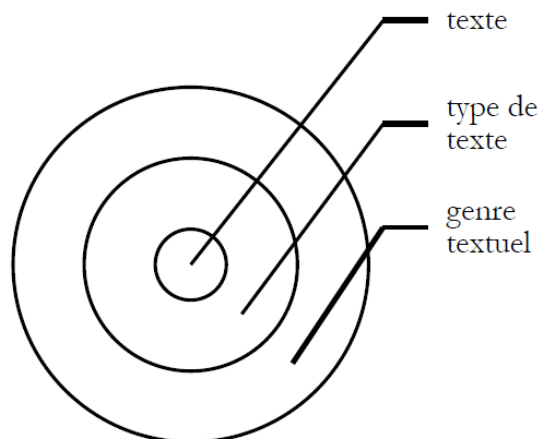
*Figure 7 - Englobing/englobed relationship of the notions of* textes, type de textes *and* genres *(taken from Simons, 2018a, p. 44)*

Employing Simons' analysis (2018a), we can conclude that the notion of text genre is present in the *CEFR* even if it is not defined explicitly.

### 3.1.3 Comparison between the older and the current versions of the legal requirements of the WBF regarding the notion of "text genre"

Before considering the notion of the press article in the legal requirements of the WBF, it can be interesting to look at the current versions of these documents as I used these for the analysis of the press article. Indeed, in his analysis, Simons (2018a) studied the versions valid until 2000. Here, I will thus propose the same analysis but consider the current versions to see if there is an evolution regarding the place given to text genres.

In order to make this comparison clearer, I suggest presenting the results of the research made in the current (grey cells) and the older documents (white cells) in the same table:

*Table 7 - Summary of the comparison between the older and the current versions of the legal requirements of the WBF regarding the notion of "text genre"*

| | *Genres textuels* | *Type(s) de textes / type(s) de production(s) (langagière)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Socles de compétences en langues modernes* (1999b) (9 pages) | / | / |
| *Socles de compétence en langues modernes* (2018) (128 pages) | / | 4 x *type(s) de textes* 26 x *type(s) de production(s)* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis en langues modernes* (1999a) (11 pages) | / | 6 x |
| *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis à l'issue des humanités générales et technologiques* (2017) (233 pages) | / | 7 x *type(s) de textes* <br> 40 x *type(s) de production(s)* |
| *Programme de langues germaniques de la Communauté française* (2000b) (234 pages) | 1 x | 17 x |
| *Programme de langues romanes – espagnol / italien – de la Communauté française* (2000a) (40 pages) | 3 x | 17 x |
| *Programme d'études de langues modernes de la Communauté française* (2020) (359 pages) | 1 x | 3 x *type(s) de textes* <br> 28 x *type(s) de production(s)* |
| *Programme de langue moderne de l'enseignement Libre* (2000) (70 pages) | 1 x | 14 x |
| *Langues modernes. 2ᵉ et 3ᵉ degrés. Général de transition* (2018) (166 pages) | 2 x | 10 x *type(s) de textes* <br> 27 x *type(s) de production(s)* |
| Total (older documents): 364 pages | 5 | 54 |
| Total (current documents): 653 pages | 3 | 145 |

In comparison with Simons' analysis (2018a), the number of pages analysed is 1.7 times greater. However, if we consider the notions of *type(s) de textes* and *type(s) de production(s)*, the ratio "number of pages / occurrences" has decreased[64], as well as the explicit occurrences of *genre textuel*. However, we find examples of text types in the UAA (which was not the case in the older versions of the documents analysed), and more specifically in:

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[64] Regarding the older documents, we have a ratio of 6.7% occurrences per page, while 1.4% for the current versions.

- *formes de supports*[65] (e.g., interview, invitation, menu, rules, social network post, commercial, game rules, horoscope);
- and *formes de productions attendues*[66] (e.g., anecdote, report, biography, cover letter, tutorial, voicemail message, wanted notice).

There is still no definition of *genre textuel*, *type(s) de textes* or *type(s) de production(s)*. However, the numerous examples of text types show an evolution regarding the place of a generic approach in the legal requirements of the WBF. This evolution might be explained by the influence of the *CEFR* on the current reference document and curricula. Indeed, as already mentioned, the *CEFR* advises an action-oriented approach in which text genres can be integrated (Simons, 2018a, p. 46).

*3.1.4 Text genre of the press article in the legal requirements of the WBF and the CEFR*

In this section, I decided to adopt a similar approach to Simons' (2018a) in order to search for some evidence of the press article in the legal requirements of the WBF and the *CEFR*. Therefore, I searched for different terms that are, in my opinion, associated with the notion of press article: *article*[67], *presse*, *article de presse*, *média*, *journal* and *magazine*[68].

3.1.4.1 Analysis of *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis - humanités générales et technologiques - langues modernes* (2017)

Nine occurrences of the word *média* were found in this 233-page document. Seven of them are located in the list of thematic subfield *4.3. Information and communication technologies, media* for the LM1, LM2 and LM3[69]. The other two occurrences are examples for explaining civic and numeric dimensions adopted by the reference document. Then, the words *article*, *journal*, *article de presse* and *presse*, were all found in the same type of parts of the document. All these

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[65] The phrase *formes de support* refers to documents related to the reading or the listening comprehension.

[66] The phrase *formes de production attendue* refers to types of oral or written production.

[67] Note that in French, as in English, I did not take into account the occurrences of "article" referring to "item" or in the sense of a grammatical article.

[68] This research was done in French as these documents are in this language.

[69] LM, which means *langue moderne*, refers to the studied foreign language. The first one is LM1, the second one is LM2 and the third one is LM3.

words were found in lists of examples of *formes de productions attendues* or *formes de supports*, which are provided to exemplify a specific UAA. I suggest gathering the main features of these occurrences in a chart to provide a more transparent analysis:

*Table 8 - Analysis of* Compétences terminales et savoirs requis - humanités générales et technologiques - langues modernes *(2017), 233 pages*

| Words and their number of occurrences | Level | Examples of | Skill | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *article*: 6 | A2 | *Formes de productions attendues* | Writing | *À visée informative* |
| (x 2) | A2 | *Formes de productions attendues* | Writing | *Pour (s')informer et pour faire agir* |
|  | B1 | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *À visée informative* |
|  | B1 | *Formes de productions attendues* | Writing | *Ecrire pour (s')informer, faire agir et exprimer des opinions, des sentiments* |
|  | B2- | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *Lire pour (s')informer et (faire) agir et comprendre des opinions et des sentiments* |
| *journal*: 5 | A2 | *Formes de productions attendues* | Writing | *Pour (s')informer et pour faire agir* |
|  | B1 | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *À visée informative* |
| (x 2) | B1 | *Formes de productions attendues* | Writing | *Pour (s')informer, faire agir, exprimer des opinions, des sentiments* |
|  | B2- | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *À visée informative* |
| *article de presse*: 1 | A2 | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *À visée informative* |
| *presse*: 1 | A2 | *Formes de supports* | Reading | *À visée informative* |
| *magazine*: 0 | / | / | / | / |

For the occurrences of *article*, they often refer to the same types of articles: *journal, revue, blog* and *dans le journal de l'école*. As a summary of Table 8, we can conclude that the activities related to the occurrences of the press article go from level A2 to B2 (which gathers nearly all the expected levels defined by the reference document, apart from A1). These activities are reading or writing activities and have different communicative intentions: to inform, act, and express opinions and feelings.

3.1.4.2 <u>Analysis of *Langues modernes. 2$^e$ et 3$^e$ degrés. Général de transition* (2018)</u>

In this 166-page document, I found two occurrences of the word *média* that were different from the reference document[70]; one was found in the examples of the suggested fields for the development of culture, and the other one in the context of reading comprehension. The word *article* was located 6 times as an example of material (*support*) for writing, reading and taking an interest in culture, as well as in the description of two activities. The first activity is a writing activity (*écrire pour informer et exprimer des sentiments*), and the target level is B1-. The second one is a reading activity (*lire pour s'informer*) for B2- level. There was no occurrence of the word *journal*. The words *article de presse* and *presse* were both found once and refer to the same occurrence as an example of a material for developing culture. Then, the word *magazine* was found twice and refers to a B2- reading comprehension (*lire pour s'informer*). It can be observed that there are fewer occurrences related to the press article in this document ($N^{71}$=10) than in the reference document (*N*=22). However, it is worth pointing out that the curriculum seems to associate media and the press article as features for taking an interest in culture.

3.1.4.3 <u>Analysis of *Programme d'études langues modernes 2e et 3e degrés des humanités générales et technologiques* (2020)</u>

In this 386-page curriculum, in contrast to the other two documents, there is no occurrence of the word *média*. However, the word *article* was found 17 times as an example of written production, reading comprehension (*lire pour (s')informer et pour (faire) agir*, B1-), and also as a means of learning about culture. Then, two occurrences of the word *journal* were found, both related to writing. The words *presse* and *article de presse* have only one occurrence and refer to the same occurrence.

3.1.4.4 <u>Analysis of the *CEFR*</u>

For the analysis of the *CEFR* (273 pages), I searched for the same words as in the curricula, but the research was made in English as there is an English version of this document. The words I

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[70] Sometimes, the curricula include some parts of the reference document as they are based on it. In the scope of my analysis, I decided not to include the duplications originally coming from the reference document.

[71] Note that in this section, "*N*" refers to the number of occurrences of a specific word.

searched for are "media"[72], "newspaper", "magazine", "article", "press", and "press article". I found 20 occurrences of the word "media", referring to listening, reading, and sociocultural knowledge. Here are some quotations of these occurrences:

*Table 9 - Quotations of "media" in the* CEFR

| Skills | Examples of quotations | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| Listening | listening to **media**[73] (radio, TV, recordings, cinema) | 65 |
| | At this level, people can understand any kind of spoken language, both when they hear it live and in the media. | 237 |
| Reading | This may happen through family experience and learning, history and contacts between generations, travel, expatriation, emigration, and more generally belonging to a multilingual and multicultural environment or moving from one environment to another, but also through reading and through the **media**. | 174 |
| Sociocultural knowledge | For FL2 at this stage particular emphasis could be placed on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements as perceived through increasing familiarity with the **media** (popular press, radio and television) and possibly linked with the native language course and benefiting from what has been covered in FL1. | 173 |

Then, the word "article" was found 36 times, referring to reading, writing as well as speaking:

*Table 10 - Quotations of "article(s)" in the* CEFR

| Skills | Examples of quotations | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | Journal **articles** | 49 |
| | I can identify specific information in simple written material such as letters, brochures and short newspaper *articles* describing events. | 231 |
| Writing | writing **articles** for magazines, newspapers, newsletters, etc.; | 61 |
| Speaking | Can summarise and give his or her opinion about a short story, **article**, talk, discussion, interview, or documentary and answer further questions of detail. | 81 |

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[72] Note that the word "media" was not searched in the sense of the plural of "medium". In addition, the research conducted in the CEFR was made in English as this document has an English version.

[73] Note that I used the bold type to emphasise where the word "media" is in the sentence. I also used this emphasis in the other tables showing examples of quotes coming from the *CEFR*.

Regarding "newspaper", there is a total of 17 occurrences with reference to writing, reading and popular culture:

*Table 11 - Quotations of "newspaper" in the* CEFR

| Skills | Examples of quotations | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | I can identify specific information in simple written material such as letters, brochures and short **newspaper** articles describing events. | 231 |
| Writing | This definition would cover a wide range of actions such as moving a wardrobe, writing a book, obtaining certain conditions in the negotiation of a contract, playing a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a foreign language text or preparing a class **newspaper** through group work. | 9 |
| Sociocultural knowledge | They are frequently used, or perhaps more often referred to or played upon, for instance in **newspaper** headlines. A knowledge of this accumulated folk wisdom, expressed in language assumed to be known to all, is a significant component of the linguistic aspect of sociocultural competence. | 120 |

"Magazine" was found seven times. In addition, there were only two times the word "press" and no occurrence of "press article":

*Table 12 - Quotations of "magazine(s)" and "press" in the* CEFR

| Skills | Examples of quotations | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | reading unmodified, ungraded, authentic written texts (newspapers, **magazines**, stories, novels, public signs and notices, etc.) | 143 |
| Writing | writing articles for **magazines**, newspapers, newsletters, etc. | 61 |
| Sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge | For FL2 at this stage particular emphasis could be placed on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements as perceived through increasing familiarity with the media (popular **press**, radio and television) and possibly linked with the native language course and benefiting from what has been covered in FL1. | 173 |
| Thematic area | In each of these thematic areas, subcategories are established. For example, area 4, 'free time and entertainment', is subcategorised in the following way:<br>[…]<br>4.8 **press** | 52 |

*3.1.5 Conclusion*

For a clearer view, here is a summary of the occurrences related to the press article in each document analysed:

*Table 13 - Summary of the occurrences related to the press article*

| Document | Number of pages | Number of occurrences related to the press article genre |
|---|---|---|
| *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis - humanités générales et technologiques - langues modernes* (2017) | 233 | 22 |
| *Langues modernes. 2$^e$ et 3$^e$ degrés. Général de transition* (2018) | 166 | 10 |
| *Programme d'études langues modernes 2e et 3e degrés des humanités générales et technologiques (2020)* | 386 | 21 |
| *CEFR* (2018) | 273 | 82 |
| Total: four documents | 1058 | 135 |

This section answered one of my research questions: "Does the notion of the press article appear in the legal requirements of the WBF and the *CEFR*?". The four documents presented words related to the press article, and the most frequent ones are "article" (*N*=65) and "*journal* / newspaper" (*N*=24). Note that, as is the case for the notions related to "text genre" in Simons' analysis (2018a), there is no definition or explanation of the searched occurrences. The writing and reading skills are the ones that were generally associated with these notions related to the press article. Listening and speaking skills are only mentioned in the *CEFR*. In addition, the two curricula and the *CEFR* establish connexions between the searched occurrences and a cultural dimension, specifically with the words "media" and "newspapers" in the case of the *CEFR*. Regarding the target levels, they are not always specified, as some occurrences are found in more general sections with no level specificity. However, as a whole, the different words seem to cover the levels from A2 to B2[74] in the curricula and the reference document and up to C2 in the *CEFR*.

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[74] Note that B2(-) is the highest level expected at the end of secondary education in reading comprehension for a first foreign language and a third Romance language.

### 3.2 Evidence of the tabloid press article in textbooks

This chapter aims to report if textbooks for learning English show some evidence of the tabloid press article explicitly or non-explicitly. By "explicitly", I mean works that include the word "tabloid" verbatim. Moreover, by "implicitly", I refer to textbooks showing evidence of sensationalist content associated with the press article, such as topics related to crimes, celebrities, miracles and discoveries, strange phenomena, etc. I chose to expand my research to sensationalist themes and not to focus exclusively on tabloid press articles because I anticipated that I might not find many "explicit" tabloid press articles in textbooks. Therefore, my initial research question "Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles?" was extended to "Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles explicitly or implicitly?". In the following sections, I will specify the corpus I focused on, the methodology I used to analyse the textbooks, and present my textbook analysis.

*3.2.1 Methods*

As suggested by Prof. Simons, I started the textbook analysis with three methodological steps in mind:

1. determining the corpus (level and date of the textbooks);
2. how to search for content related to tabloids in textbooks;
3. using an analysis table for the activities that I found interesting for the theme of the tabloid press article.

Prof. Simons recommended that I work with the textbooks available at the ALPHA Germanic Languages and Literatures library, which has a special section devoted to didactics. In this library section, a number of textbooks have been ordered by the Department of Didactics of Modern Languages and are available for the training students. Prof. Simons argued that it was interesting to analyse this offer of textbooks as it reflects the material used in Francophone Belgian schools.

Regarding the first criterion, Prof. Simons advised me to limit the corpus with textbooks from intermediate to advanced levels between 2000 and today. Indeed, these levels correspond to the level of the future students I would have to teach, namely, students in the fourth, fifth and sixth years of secondary school. In addition, I mainly focused on student's books. If a student's book presented interesting elements for my analysis (i.e., explicit mention of a tabloid), I also decided to look at its equivalent workbook and teacher's book.

Then, for the textbook analysis method itself, Prof. Simons told me to start by reading the table of contents of each textbook as it is generally detailed in different categories: unit, theme, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, writing and speaking.

After determining the corpus, Prof. Simons recommended using an analysis table to analyse my textbook corpus. To do so, he showed me, as an example, a table that a former student had used in her dissertation[75] and which I used as a basis to create my own analysis table:

*Table 14 - Textbook analysis table*

| Textbook and activity identification | |
|---|---|
| Textbook (Name, Level, Year) | |
| Unit | |
| Name of the activity and page | |
| Section under which appears the activity (vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, speaking, culture, etc.) | |
| Purposes of the activity | |
| Is the activity explicitly a tabloid press article? If not, how is it linked to the tabloid press? | |
| Is it used to learn or improve a point of grammar? If so, which one? | |
| Is it used to enrich vocabulary? | |
| Is it used to deal with culture? | |
| Other analysis comments | |

When a textbook presented a tabloid press article explicitly, I decided to have a more detailed look at the activities it goes with and the skills concerned. Regarding textbooks with tabloid press article themes, I decided not to develop these activities in detail and only to summarise the number of textbooks. As my analysis of textbooks progressed, I realised that some textbooks proposed a comparison activity between a broadsheet press article and a tabloid press article. Due to this recurrence, I found it interesting to compare some of these activities, taking the following questions into account:

−   Are the tabloid and the broadsheet articles explicitly authentic documents? Do they pertain to an actual newspaper?

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[75] I refer to Hendricé's dissertation *The text genres of the recipe and the menu in the teaching of English* (2019, pp. 49-50).

- What is/are the activity/ies suggested?
- What are the skills pursued by this/these activity/ies?

Section 3.2.2.2 will thus focus on the research question: "If recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles, how are they presented and what is their purpose for English learning?".

### 3.2.2 Textbook corpus analysis

3.2.2.1 <u>Sensationalist themes</u>[76]

Here is a table displaying the textbooks containing sensationalist themes (i.e., implicit mentions of tabloid press articles):

*Table 15 - Textbook corpus analysis: sensationalist themes*

| Theme / Level | Famous people, celebrities | Murders, crimes | Miracles, unbelievable stories |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intermediate | *-Inside out* (2000)<br>*-Real life* (teacher's handbook, 2010)<br>*-Real life* (Workbook, 2010) | *-American English* (2014)<br>*-New English File* (2006)<br>*-New Headway* (2009)<br>*-Step forward 3* (2017) | *-Real life* (Workbook, 2010) |
| Upper-intermediate | *-English in mind* (2011)<br>*-Inside out* (2001) | *-Cutting edge* (2013)<br>*-Face2Face* (2007)<br>*-Real life* (teacher's handbook, 2011) | *-Cutting edge* (2013)<br>*-New Headway* (2014) |
| Advanced | *-English collocations in use* (2017)<br>*-English in mind* (2012)<br>*-Face2Face* (2009)<br>*-Initiative* (2000)<br>*-New Headway* (2012) | *-Inside out* (2001) | |
| Totals of activities | 10 | 8 | 3 |

Out of 47 textbooks[77], 20 include activities with sensationalist themes. We can therefore say that almost half of the corpus includes a sensationalist theme, and it is more than likely that

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[76] Sometimes the same textbook is mentioned several times if it presents more than one theme.

[77] The reader can find the complete list of the analysed textbooks in Appendix B, pp. 113-116.

some activities were missed due to my research method. Consequently, in my opinion, we can conclude that sensationalist themes are quite recurrent in textbooks.

### 3.2.2.2 Textbooks explicitly mentioning tabloids

Of the 47 textbooks analysed, ten activities include an explicit mention of tabloids, which represents almost a fifth of the corpus analysed. As for the analysis of sensationalist themes, I suggest a summary table in order to have a clearer overview of the activities referring to the tabloids:

*Table 16 - Textbook corpus analysis: activities with tabloids*

| Textbooks identification (level, name, year) | Unit | Activity |
|---|---|---|
| Intermediate | | |
| - *Communicate listening and speaking skills 2* (2012) | 4. In the News | (whole unit) |
| - *Real life* (teacher's handbook, 2010) | 10. In the News | (whole unit) |
| Upper-intermediate | | |
| - *American English file, 4* (2014) | Vocabulary bank | The media, p. 161 |
| - *Cutting edge* (2013) | 10. Media p. 96 | (whole unit) |
| - *English vocabulary in use* (2006) | 59. The press and the media | (whole unit) |
| - *Gateway* (2011) | 10. Breaking news p. 122 | British newspapers p. 126 |
| - *Inside out* (2001) | 11. Sell p. 98 | Truth or tabloid? p. 104 |
| Advanced | | |
| - *Face2face* (2009) | 4. Civilised p. 36 | 4C. Making a splash p. 42 |
| - *Inside out* (2001) | 9. Law p. 78 | Newspaper reports p. 85 |
| - *Initiative* (2000) | 10. Read all about it! p. 94 | (whole unit) |

A conclusion that can already be drawn is that activities explicitly mentioning tabloids are primarily present in the upper-intermediate textbooks. Six of these textbooks define the term "tabloid(s)", and I found it interesting to compare them:

*Table 17 - Textbook corpus analysis: tabloid definitions*

| Textbook (date) - level | Definition (quotes) |
|---|---|
| *Communicate listening and speaking skills 2* (2012) – intermediate | "Tabloid newspapers in Britain often include crazy stories about improbable events." (p. 23) |
| *Real life* (teacher's handbook, 2010) – intermediate | "UK newspapers that focus on serious journalism, e.g. *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, used to be called *broadsheets* due to their large size. Less serious 'sensational' newspapers, e.g. *The Sun*, *The Mirror*, are known for their small size as tabloids." (p. 76) |
| *Gateway* (2011) – upper-intermediate | "Tabloids are newspapers that have small pages. They often contain a lot of photographs and news that is not considered very serious, such as celebrity gossip or scandal. Examples are *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*." (p. 126) |
| *American English file, 4* (2014) – upper-intermediate | "Newspapers headlines, especially in tabloids*, often use short snappy words. These words use up less space and are more emotive, which helps to sell newspapers.<br><br>*newspapers with smaller pages that print short articles with lots of photos, often about famous people" (p. 161) |
| *English vocabulary in use* (2006) – upper-intermediate | "A **popular** or **tabloid newspaper** focuses more on sensation than real news whereas a quality newspaper professes to be more interested in real news than in sensation. A tabloid usually has a smaller format than a **quality paper**, it has larger headlines and shorter stories, and, in Britain, it prefers stories about film stars, violent crimes and the royal family." (p. 120) |
| *Inside out* (2001) – advanced | "Newspapers which contain bold headlines and large photographs. The page size is half that of a **broadsheet**. The writing style is informal; sentences are short and dramatic vocabulary is used to grab the reader's attention, especially in the headlines. Tabloids often contain horoscopes, stories about celebrities and problem pages. Stories tend to be of more national than global interest. British tabloids include *The Sun*, *The Mirror* and *The News of the World*." (p. 85) |

These definitions can be compared in several aspects: *examples of tabloid newspapers*, lack of seriousness compared to the qualities/broadsheets, format/size, photographs, dramatic language effect and sensationalist themes like celebrities, scandals and crimes.

The criteria that were present at least in three of the six definitions are lack of seriousness compared to the qualities/broadsheets (x3), the presence of examples (x 3), the format (x 5), photographs (x 3), dramatic effect (x 4) and sensationalist themes (x 5).

## Activities on tabloid press articles

Moreover, of these ten textbooks, five have an entire unit mentioning tabloids. In addition, three of them focus on comparing broadsheets and tabloids, and I found it interesting to compare and comment on them.

## A. *Gateway* (2011) upper-intermediate: (unit 10) British newspapers pp. 126-127

Presentation and description of the activities

"British newspapers" is a two-page section of Unit 10 of the upper-intermediate *Gateway* (2011) (see Appendix C, pp. 117-118). This section is part of "International cultural knowledge" and begins with reading an "information box", which introduces the notions of broadsheets and tabloids to the learner. Then, the learner is asked to answer questions about quality newspapers and tabloid newspapers: "Do tabloids exist in your country? Are they popular? What sort of stories do they print?" (p. 126). After this activity, the following exercise is a listening comprehension about two people having a conversation on the British press. The learner's task is to complete the missing words in the given sentences. Activities 3 and 4 are speaking activities, one is related to the previous listening comprehension, and in the other one, the student has to explain his or her opinion. The following section is entitled "Cross-curricular – Media studies. Comparing newspaper stories" (p. 126). Activity 5 invites the learner to compare two pictures. In order to do this exercise, the learner is given a "word booster" containing useful keywords for the picture comparison that he/ she has to match with their definition. Then, the learner has to compare two stories, Story A and Story B (activities 6 and 7). In pairs, students will work on questions related to each story, one working on Story A and the other one on Story B. After this, the partners should discuss their answers as well as three other questions:

1) Which section of the newspaper would you expect each of the texts to appear in? Why?

2) Which text do you think came from a quality newspaper and which came from a tabloid? Why?

3) What do you think is a good headline for each story? (p. 127)

The last activity consists of two thought provoking questions:

1. What do you think about the idea of 'pink for a girl, blue for a boy'?

2. Should pink toys be banned, in your opinion? (p. 127)

Comments on the activities

The first activity is interesting because asking students to compare the British press with the press in their country is a way to lead to cross-cultural thinking. The articles (Story A and B) do not seem to be authentic, as no source is mentioned. Students have to determine whether the article comes from a tabloid newspaper or a quality newspaper based on the definitions[78] they have been given. However, these definitions do not mention the style or vocabulary that would help the students identify the two types of newspapers. Indeed, the definitions only mention the type of content these newspapers deal with and their format. The last activity is quite interesting as it raises a social issue: pink for girls and blue for boys. I think that this is innovative and quite unusual in textbooks, especially in a ten-year-old textbook, where this kind of concern was, in my opinion, not so popular. More generally, this part of the unit deals with listening, reading, speaking, and reflection/criticism, which makes these two pages on the British newspapers quite complete regarding skills practice but not regarding a generic approach to the text genre of the press article.

## B. *Face2face* (2009) advanced: 4C. Making a splash pp. 42-43

Presentation and description of the activities

The pages of "Making a splash" (see Appendix D, pp. 119-120) aims to cover several objectives: learning about newspaper language, reading stories from tabloids and broadsheets, listening to an interview with a sub-editor, creating a front-page news story, persuading and reviewing near-synonyms (p. 42). These objectives cover the four skills: reading, writing, speaking

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[78] "Quality newspapers are newspapers that contain serious news and articles. Examples are *The Guardian* and *The Times.* Some of these quality newspapers are called *broadsheets* because they have large pages. However, many quality newspapers are now *compacts*, with small pages. Tabloids are newspapers that have small pages. They often contain a lot of photographs and news that is not considered very serious, such as celebrity gossip or scandal. Examples are *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*".

and listening. The first activity consists of comparing the front pages of the same day but coming from two different authentic newspapers (*Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian*). The first pair-task activity is to answer some questions which will lead the learners to compare these newspapers:

> 1. In what ways are these two newspapers different? Think about the size and content of the headlines, the page layout and what the main stories are.
>
> 2. Which paper is a tabloid and which is a broadsheet?
>
> 3. Which type of newspaper do you think sells the most?
>
> 4. What kind of readership do you think the different newspapers appeal to? (p. 42)

After this activity, the learner will listen to the sub-editor of a national tabloid newspaper and fill in the missing information of sentences about the tabloid and the broadsheet. The third activity is also based on comparing articles from a tabloid and a broadsheet. This time, the learner is asked to focus on the language used in these newspapers (sentence and paragraph length and vocabulary). Finally, as a writing exercise, the learner has to "write a story as it might appear on the front page of either a 'middle-of-road' or 'downmarket' tabloid" (p. 43).

Comments on the activities

The two front pages, which illustrate a tabloid newspaper and a broadsheet newspaper, are authentic documents. Then, through various activities, the learner is invited to compare these newspapers on several aspects: format (size), content (headlines and main stories), language (style, vocabulary), layout, sentence and paragraph length, and sales. I think that all of these comparative points will help the learner to analyse both newspapers thoroughly. Moreover, these items might help define what a tabloid newspaper and a broadsheet newspaper are since no definition is given in the textbook. The several activities proposed in this section of Unit 4 target various skills: discussing and working in pairs, listening, reading and writing. In addition, regarding the writing activity, I think there is a lack of an institutionalisation phase[79] that aims to guide students through the new knowledge.

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[79] Definition of *institutionnalisation phase*: "Le processus d'institutionnalisation est finalisé par la mise en évidence et la légitimation des savoirs appris (ou censés avoir été appris) au cours des situations (…). Ce processus semble nécessaire car ce qui est nouveau en situation (…) ne prend pas automatiquement le statut de nouveau savoir aux yeux des élèves" (Reuter, 2010, p. 123).

**C.** *Inside out* **(2001) advanced: (unit 9) Newspaper reports pp. 85-86**

<u>Presentation and description of the activities</u>

At the beginning of the section "Newspaper reports" (see Appendix E, pp. 121-122), the learner has to read the definitions of the broadsheet and the tabloid and then decide to which type of newspapers the four articles presented belong. After this, the learner has to complete the missing information of each article using the given words and phrases. In addition, the learner has to choose between formal and informal words. The next activity consists of writing the end of one of the four articles with a partner. The instruction specifies that the style used has to correspond to the tabloid or the broadsheet style. The second writing activity is to rewrite a story as if it was a tabloid article. Once again, the learner has to pay attention to style and lexicon. Then there is a grammar point on inversion after "neither / nor, so and such" with exercises based on the newspapers. Finally, another exercise focuses on rewriting sentences from a broadsheet as sentences from a tabloid.

<u>Comments on the activities</u>

The definitions given to tabloid and broadsheet newspapers are detailed and precise enough for the learner to distinguish between the two and thus identify which article belongs to which type of newspaper. Indeed, these definitions mention vocabulary, style, content, size, presence of photographs and real-life examples. Furthermore, the writing activities include rewriting an article in a broadsheet or a tabloid type of newspaper, which requires understanding and mastering the different elements that characterise both newspapers However, there is a real gap between identifying such characteristics in the first activities and producing news articles responding to these characteristics. Indeed, the activities go directly from identification to production without intermediate exercises which mobilise some of these specificities individually, an institutionalisation phase is thus missing. Nevertheless, the integration of the inversion after neither / nor, so and such is exemplified using sentences in the newspaper articles present in the unit, which I think is a great way to give students real-life examples and thus show them the importance and the utility of this grammar point. The different exercises in this section mainly refer to reading and writing skills.

*3.2.2 Conclusion*

Some of the textbooks (20) share this feature of dealing with sensationalist themes typical of the tabloid newspaper as celebrities, murders and crimes, miracles and unbelievable stories. Other textbooks (10) explicitly mention tabloid newspapers and/or articles. In the framework of this analysis, I focused on three activities that share the particularity of comparing tabloids and broadsheets. The presentation and the analysis of these activities show that there are various ways of approaching this comparison between broadsheets and tabloids, in terms of skills, but also in the questioning that accompanies the analysis of these newspapers. Activities on sensationalistic themes are found at every level, while activities explicitly mentioning tabloids were mainly found at the upper-intermediate level.

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## 4. Teachers' declarative data: survey on the written press and the tabloid press article

This survey aimed at gathering information about what language teachers state about their use of the press article text genre and the tabloid press article. This section will thus answer two research questions: "Do foreign language teachers use the press article?" and "Do English teachers use the tabloid press article?". As I was not the only student writing my dissertation in didactics, Prof. Simons suggested that the other student, Noémie Vanherck, and I join our two surveys to create one. Creating a single survey was a strategic way to target more respondents than if our surveys had been administered individually. Therefore, we have written the survey introduction and the personal information sheet of the survey together.

The main introduction of the survey (see Appendix F, p. 123) explains our project, introduces our supervisor, Prof. Simons, and co-supervisor, Prof. Brems, as well as some modalities of the survey; the maximum amount of time required to complete it, and, most importantly, the fact that we ensured anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents' answers in order to follow the General Data Protection Regulation from 2016.

The second common part of the survey, which is the personal information sheet of the respondents (see Appendix F, pp. 124-127), had to contain questions which would be useful for both of our surveys. The purpose of this part is to get information about the respondent's profile, which is helpful to present the statistical sample for the analysis of the results. The type of questions found in this section is thus *factual questions*[80].

After writing these two parts together, we submitted them to Prof. Simons with our respective surveys. In December 2021, Prof. Simons suggested that Noémie and I have a meeting with Audrey Renson[81]. During this meeting, which took place on 15th December 2021, Noémie and I gave a brief presentation about our dissertation projects to Prof. Simons and Mrs Renson. After providing us with some advice and feedback, Mrs Renson presented us an interesting PowerPoint (Renson, 2019) on elaborating a survey. Through this presentation and Mrs Renson's explanations, we were given helpful advice for writing a motivating and usable survey. Mrs Renson taught us the importance of question order and wording, typographical markers, the different possible biases (see p. 62), how to present and send our survey to the respondents,

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[80] These questions, also called *classification questions* or *subject descriptors*, "are used to find out about who the respondents are (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5).

[81] Mrs Renson is a PhD student writing her doctoral thesis about the text genre of the debate under Prof. Simons' supervision and a member of the Research Unit in Didactics and Teacher Education (DIDACTIfen).

when to send it as well as when to resend it.

I learned that many factors had to be taken into account as they play a key role in the respondent's motivation, honesty and choices when answering the survey. Moreover, it is essential to mention that there are no right or wrong answers and that even a "no" is important to respond to a survey. While constructing my questions, I tried to take into account three possible biases presented by Mrs Renson: the *prestige bias*[82], the *acquiescence bias*[83] and the *fatigue effects*[84], which may all lead to unusable and/or distorted answers.

These elements make clear that creating a survey is neither a light nor a quick process if we want to collect usable data. This also explains why it took months and precisely 11 proof-readings by Prof. Simons before the surveys were sent to potential respondents. Additionally, before the survey was sent out, it had to be pre-tested to make final changes and determine the time needed to complete the survey. Indeed, it is important, even crucial, to indicate the maximum response time of the survey so that the respondents know the time they will need to answer it.

## 4.1   Methods

### 4.1.1 Survey design

My survey comprises two parts and consists of a "funnel method", going from general questions about the press article directed to all foreign language teachers to questions addressed to English teachers and dealing specifically with the tabloid press article. This approach is similar to my theoretical approach, as I begin with the press article before focusing on the tabloid article. These two parts share many similar questions to know more about the use or non-use of the press article and the tabloid press article by language teachers and English teachers. Therefore,

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[82] Also, *social desirability bias* refers to the fact that "people do not always provide true answers about themselves; that is, the results represent what the respondents report to feel or believe, rather than what they actually feel or believe" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 8).

[83] It refers to "the tendency for people to agree with sentences when they are unsure or ambivalent" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 9).

[84] "If a survey is too long or monotonous, respondents may begin to respond inaccurately as a result of tiredness or boredom" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 9).

the type of questions that we find are *behavioural*[85] and *attitudinal questions*[86]. As mentioned earlier, the eventuality of having negative answers to some questions is information that should be taken into account. Indeed, having explanations for negative answers can be a starting point to overcome some of the difficulties and fears of using the press article or tabloid press article. However, I can put forward the fact that the respondents of the survey[87] might be interested in one of the topics discussed (i.e., the (tabloid) press article and/or the influencers). Otherwise, they would not have answered the survey. Thus, I think that the respondents are somehow sensitive to at least one of these topics, which suggests that there are few or no respondents who are indifferent or opposed to these topics.

I decided to use different types of questions in order to avoid misunderstandings and to make my questions and proposals as clear as possible. I used "yes" or "no" questions which are sometimes followed by a sub-question with different propositions to detail the answer. Most of the time, I tried to think about the most likely propositions to avoid analysing numerous open-ended questions. I also offer the possibility to develop the answer using the item "other", which allows the respondent to provide an answer in their own words or to present a proposal that was not present.

I also used multiple-choice questions with several propositions, and there is also one open question. Then, the most frequent questions are accompanied by Likert scales and are of three types:

1) *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree*;
2) *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, *very often*, *always*;
3) *useless*, *not very useful*, *useful*, *very useful*, *essential*.

Usually, Likert scales count five statements (as in types 2 and 3); however, in type 1) there are only four propositions. The one missing in type 1) is the neutral one (figuratively and literally) which is *more or less agree*. I chose not to propose this statement in *agreement questions*

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[85] "Behavioural questions are used to find out what the respondents are doing or have done in the past" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5).

[86] "*Attitudinal questions* are used to find out what people think. This is a broad category that concerns *attitudes*, *opinions*, *beliefs*, *interests* and *values*" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5).

[87] Note that here by "survey", I refer to the complete survey, including Noémie's and mine.

to avoid this middle tendency, which does not provide any genuine opinion (in the case of type 1) [88]. Moreover, Prof. Simons and Mrs Renson advised me not to offer a neutral proposition.

After Prof. Simons' last suggestions and commentaries, we had to create the online version of our survey as it was, until then, only on a Word document. In order to do so, we had to choose the platform we would work with, which ended up being Google Forms for several reasons. Indeed, Google Forms is a free platform that offers interesting functionalities for designing our survey and analysing the results. This platform allowed us to create different sections within the survey. Moreover, this platform being available on Google Drive, it was appropriate for teamwork. Another important option of Google Forms is that it offers the possibility to create tables where it is possible to integrate Likert scales. This parameter was crucial for us since our surveys contain numerous Likert scales. Another advantage of this platform is that it redirects the respondent to a specific question based on their answer. This functionality was interesting (and even compulsory) and a time-saving option for the respondents. Google Forms was also a great choice in data analysis because it allows us to have the results in Excel tables and graphs. In addition, this platform allows the respondents to save their progress and return to the survey later.

### 4.1.2 Presenting the questions

My survey is divided into two parts: one on the press article in foreign languages and another on the tabloid press article in the English classroom. These parts several common questions. For clarity, both parts of my survey begin with a definition. Providing these definitions was crucial because if the respondents had different representations in mind, we would end up with incomparable answers. In the first part on the written press, I provided the respondents with Simons' operational definition of text genre and some examples:

> Dans cette section se présente la notion de « **genre textuel** », que nous entendons comme « *un regroupement de productions langagières, écrites, orales ou audiovisuelles, relativement stables, qui s'inscrivent dans une société, une culture et une époque données. La maitrise des caractéristiques d'un genre textuel est un outil qui permet d'agir dans une situation de communication donnée, tant en réception qu'en production* ». (Simons, 2021-2022, p. 149). *Exemples : l'éditorial, l'annonce immobilière, le CV, la critique de film, le menu, etc.* (See Appendix F, p. 128)

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[88] Dörnyei and Taguchi mention that "[…] providing an accurate answer often involves a fair amount of cognitive work, and therefore individuals who are less motivated to expend cognitive effort tend to take such a "satisfying" strategy. […] Besides, the middle category choice can also be related to the cultural characteristics of respondents" (2010, p. 28).

In the second part, I suggested my own definition of the tabloid press article that I based on the *OALD* definitions of *tabloid* and *sensationalism*:

*Un article de presse à sensation traite généralement de sujets moins sérieux que ceux abordés dans les journaux d'information, tels que des histoires sur les célébrités, et cela de manière sensationnelle afin d'éveiller l'intérêt des lecteur·rices. Ces articles sont généralement courts et accompagnés de nombreuses photos.* (See Appendix F, p. 139)

In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions, I decided to present the common questions[89] to both surveys and then the questions specific to the tabloid press article survey.


4.1.2.1 Questions common to both parts of the survey

Both surveys start with a question to determine whether or not the respondents use the print media and the tabloid press article. If the answer was "no", the respondents were asked about the reason(s) why they do not use it/them.

Then, both parts of the surveys mainly consist of questions related to the teaching of this/these material(s):

- From which **year(s) and level(s)** do you think it is best to teach (tabloid) newspaper articles?
- For what **purpose(s)** do you use (tabloid) newspaper articles in your foreign language/English lessons?
- At what **point(s)** in a teaching sequence do you incorporate (tabloid) newspaper articles?
- **Where** do you find the press articles you use in your lessons (several answers possible)?[90]

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[89] Note that the survey was written in French (because the survey was directed and sent to foreign language teachers, and not only to English teachers). For smoother reading, I will translate the questions into English and provide the original text in French in footnote.

[90] -"Selon vous, à partir de **quelle(s) année(s) scolaire(s) et de quel(s) niveau(x)** est-il préférable d'enseigner l'article de presse (à sensation) ?"

-"À quelle(s) **fin(s)** avez-vous recours aux articles de presse (à sensation dans vos cours de langue étrangère / d'anglais ? "

-"À quel(s) **moment(s)** d'une séquence didactique incorporez-vous l'article de presse (à sensation) ?"

-"**Où** trouvez-vous les articles de presse que vous utilisez dans le cadre de vos cours ? (Plusieurs réponses possibles) ? "

These questions were asked to know more about the respondents' habits when teaching the (tabloid) press article. I also decided to include some questions about their methodology. More specifically, I asked how they use the (tabloid) press article: explicitly or implicitly. To make this question clear for the respondents, I suggested an explanation for both terms:

> De manière **explicite**, c'est-à-dire en clarifiant les savoirs, compétences et attitudes relatifs au genre textuel et ensuite en les faisant exercer à travers une pratique guidée et ensuite autonome.[91]

> De manière **implicite**, c'est-à-dire en laissant les élèves découvrir les différences par eux·elles-mêmes et en leur demandant d'imiter ce genre textuel sans avoir explicité ses caractéristiques. (See Appendix F, p. 133)

I decided to ask this question about explicit or implicit learning because when I was writing the survey, I hypothesized that most teachers might use the (tabloid) press article, but not necessarily explicitly, as it might seem a waste of time.

Regarding their methods, a question asked the respondents if they raise students' awareness of critical reading (or not), which I defined as questioning the information they read in an article: "When dealing with a news article, to what **frequency** do you make students aware of critical reading of that article? By *critical reading* we mean questioning the information they read in an article" (see Appendix F, p. 134). This question was asked because I consider the (tabloid) press article as useful material for developing critical thinking skills (see Section 2.5.4, p. 34). However, I was curious to know if the respondents would state that they teach this approach as it might be perceived, by some of them, as a waste of time, as a skill that does not have to be worked on in English class or that they are not trained in.

### 4.1.2.2 Questions specific to the tabloid press article survey

First, I asked the respondents to give me their impressions of the tabloid press article definition see Appendix F, p. 139) that I provided: "What do you think of the definition of the tabloid press article proposed above? Does it match your personal definition of this type of press

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[91] Definition based on Bissonnette and Richard's definition of *explicit teaching*: "L'enseignement explicite se divise en trois étapes subséquentes : le modeling ou modelage, la pratique guidée ou dirigée et la pratique autonome ou indépendante. L'étape du modelage a pour but de favoriser, auprès des élèves, la compréhension de l'objectif d'apprentissage, celle de la pratique dirigée leur permet d'ajuster et de consolider leur compréhension dans l'action et, finalement, la dernière étape, la pratique autonome, fournit de multiples occasions d'apprentissage nécessaires à la maîtrise et à l'automatisation de connaissances" (2003, p. 1).

article? If not, I invite you to write your comments below"[92]. This question will help me know more about the respondents' representations of this press article.

Afterwards, English teachers were asked whether or not they use the tabloid press article in their classes: "Do you use **tabloid** articles in your English lessons?"[93]. If the answer was "yes", they were asked how they consider the benefits of this material and what is its added value for English learning: "If so, how would you rate the **contribution** of this specific press to the English course?"[94]. If the answer was "no", they were invited to explain why: "If **not**, what are the **reasons** why you do not teach it?"[95]. This question is interesting and essential in the framework of my dissertation as it will present the respondents' possible reluctance to deal with the tabloid press article.

### 4.1.3 Trial run

The pre-test phase began during the last week of February 2022, after the online version of the survey was created. Prof. Simons advised us to have our survey reviewed by a specific audience: the three assistants of the didactics team[96], Mrs Renson and a specific panel[97] of ten teachers: six teachers from the free subsidised network, three from the WBF network and one from the Province of Liège. We thus sent an email explaining our request for this pre-test phase to the members of the didactics team, Julie Vanhoof, Florence Van Hoof and Alain Segatto, and to Mrs Renson as well as to some of our former training supervisors in order to create the panel of respondents suggested by Prof. Simons.

This pre-test stage aimed at adapting our survey regarding the comments we got from

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[92] "Que **pensez-vous** de la définition de l'article de presse à sensation proposée ci-dessus ? Correspond-elle à votre définition personnelle de ce type d'article de presse ? Si ce n'est pas le cas, je vous invite à écrire vos commentaires ci-dessous." (See Appendix F, p. 139)

[93] "Avez-vous recours à l'article de presse à **sensation** dans vos cours d'anglais ?" (See Appendix F, p. 139)

[94] "Si **oui**, comment jugez-vous l'**apport** de cette presse spécifique dans le cadre du cours d'anglais ?" (See Appendix F, p. 141)

[95] "Si **non**, quelle en est/quelles en sont la/les **raison(s)** ?" (See Appendix F, p. 140)

[96] Note that the assistants of the didactics team, Julie Vanhoof, Florence Van Hoof and Alain Segatto, work part-time as foreign language teachers in secondary school. They are thus in an ideal position to give feedback on the survey.

[97] Prof. Simons recommended this panel because it reflects the representation of the three networks in reality. According to statistics from 2019-2020, the free subsided network represents 61.42%, the WBF network 23.37%, and the subsidised public school network 15.21% (statistiques.cfwb.be, n.d., n.p.).

the pre-testers and ensuring there were no technical problems when answering the survey. When Noémie and I sent the survey out to be pre-tested, we asked the potential respondents to give us feedback on specific items such as the time they needed to answer the survey, the way answers and propositions are formulated, the use of the Google Forms platform, the length of the survey, etc. We have paid particular attention to these points and have made it clear that any other comments or suggestions were welcome. Indeed, we would adapt our surveys according to the feedback received in order to create the final version of the surveys and thus build the most realistic and exploitable database. Moreover, their experience of pre-testing our survey was also an opportunity to know the maximum time needed to answer it. Indeed, by means of the meeting we had to construct our survey, Mrs Renson insisted on the respondent's motivation, which is partly based on the time he or she will need to fill in our survey.

Unfortunately, at the end of the pre-test stage, due to a lack of time and answers, we could not fulfil the panel of pre-tester teachers and ended up with four teachers (three from the free subsidised network and one from the WBF) instead of the ten suggested by Prof. Simons. In addition, the timing of sending the survey for pre-testing must more than likely have impacted the number of respondents as we sent it just before a holiday week.

Thanks to the feedback I received from the pre-testers, we could evaluate the time needed to answer the survey, estimated at between 15 and 30 minutes. Indeed, regarding the answers, the respondents were directed to specific questions, sometimes leading to a shorter survey. In addition, the respondents seemed comfortable using the Google Forms platform as no adverse comments were given. I was advised to separate the definitions from the questions and, therefore, not to include the definitions in the questions. This change aimed to clarify the questions and introduce the reader to the definitions I will deal with at the beginning of the sections.

After this pre-test stage, Prof. Simons also tested our online surveys. As "yes" and "no" answers do not lead the respondents to the same following questions, Prof. Simons focused his online reading on answering "yes" and, in order to cover all the questions and the propositions of the survey, he asked us to send him a file with the "no" questions.

### 4.1.4 Survey administration

After Prof. Simons' last reviews of our survey, it was distributed at the end of March 2022. For its distribution, Noémie and I were fortunate to receive Mrs Van Hoof's help, who kindly sent

an email to the training supervisors of the didactics asking them to participate in our survey. Three weeks after the administration of the survey, the number of participants did not rise a lot (26). This is why we decided to relaunch the survey after some discussion with Prof. Simons. To do so, Mrs Van Hoof sent another email to the training supervisors of the didactics students. In addition, Noémie and I posted the survey on our personal Facebook accounts and on Facebook groups dedicated to master students. This boost was strategic because research has shown that "sending a second email can increase the rate of participation by 30%" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2002, p. 66). Indeed, this second sending and posting of the survey were crucial as we gained 15 respondents in one day.

## 4.2    Results and analysis

Before presenting the survey results, I would like to specify that it consists of an analysis of declarative data and not a statistical analysis. When I wanted to explore the results of a specific question in depth, the number of respondents (58) allowed me to use the Excel "sort & filter" function. This function allowed me to focus on specific results thanks to the Excel sheet of results automatically generated by Google Forms. As a consequence, coding was not necessary for the analysis of responses. In addition, I chose not to address specific questions and, therefore, their answers because they were not central or did not answer my research questions. The fact that some questions were omitted when analysing the results can also be explained by the fact that the survey was written at the beginning of the school year when I did not yet have a thorough knowledge of the scientific literature and the legal requirements. However, the reader can find all the questions and their results in Appendix G (pp. 151-176). Besides, the reader should be aware that when percentages are presented, they will sometimes be followed by the number (i.e., *N*) of respondents who answered the question in brackets (if the number of respondents is not already explicitly mentioned), e.g., 59% (*N*=20), means that we consider 59% of 20 respondents. This choice was made to specify the sample that responded to the relevant question and thus not bias the understanding of the results. I would also like to specify that Noémie Vanherck and I were fortunate to receive Mrs Renson's help and advice analysing the results of our surveys.

*4.2.1 Respondents' profiles*

As explained above, my survey is divided into two sections that target a different public of respondents. Indeed, the first section is directed to foreign language teachers, and the second one is only directed to English teachers. Therefore, each section has different respondent profiles, so I will present the profiles corresponding to each section.

4.2.1.1 Respondent's profiles of section 1: foreign language teachers

I collected 58 responses for this section between 23$^{rd}$ February and 5$^{th}$ May 2022. Among these 58 respondents, there are 51 women, 6 men, and 1 individual who identified as non-binary. It might appear striking that 88% of the respondents are women. However, statistics conducted in 2022[98] show that there are 81.31% of women and 18.69% of men among the foreign language teachers of the WBF. Accordingly, even if the sample of respondents consists of only 58 individuals, the fact that there are more women than men reflects reality. Most of these respondents are teachers (54), and 4 are students who are considering becoming teachers and have already completed internship hours. The professional experience of the respondents varies from zero and five years to between 41 and 45 years:
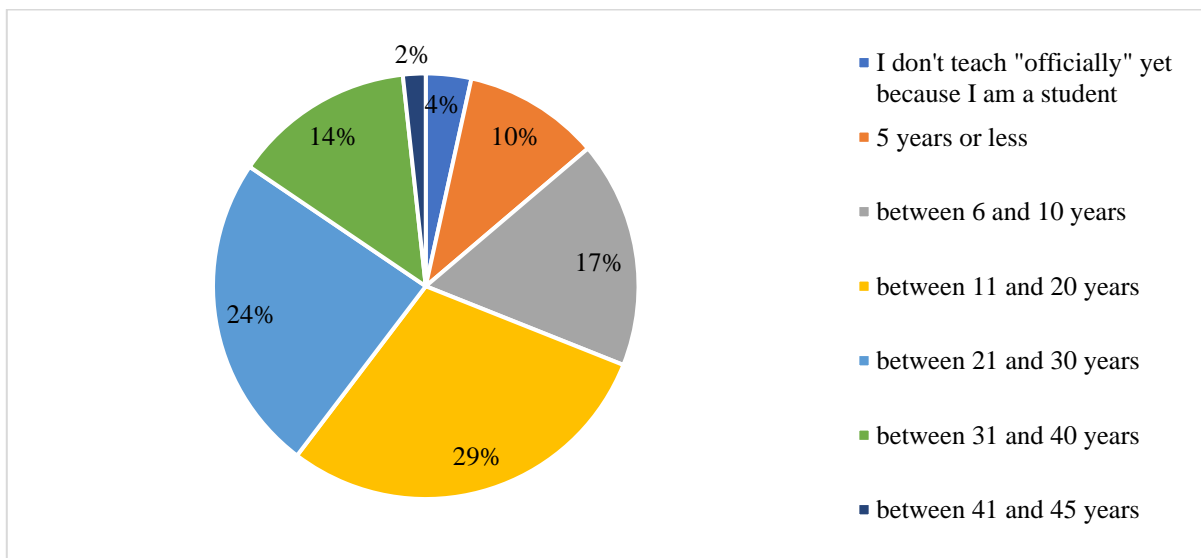


*Figure 8 - "How many years have you been teaching?" - Results*

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[98] The reader will find the details of these data in Appendix H, p. 178. I have the opportunity to present these figures using a request made by email to the WBF statistics department (i.e., statistique@cfwb.be).

As we can observe, the respondents have different professional experiences: 17 have been working as teachers for between 11 and 20 years, 14 for between 21 and 30 years and 10 for between 6 and 10 years.

It has to be specified that most respondents are training supervisors, meaning they do not represent the average teachers. Indeed, they are still in contact with the academic field and thus know about the teaching practices taught via the student trainees from the University of Liège. Additionally, most of them teach in the Province of Liège. As a consequence, these respondents do not represent the whole WBF. Thus, it is important to mention that this statistical sample is rather specific, meaning that the results have to be analysed and considered with precaution and not as generalities representative of the average teachers of the WBF.

Then, the most recurrent scientific degrees[99] are *Licence en langues et littératures germaniques* or *Master en langues et lettres germaniques*[100] (31 respondents), *Licence en langues et littératures modernes* or *Master en langues et lettres modernes* (15 respondents), *Master en traduction*, *Master des traductions* or *License en traduction* (13 respondents). From a larger perspective, 54 respondents have a master's degree and 4 a bachelor's degree.

*Table 18 - "What is your highest scientific degree?" - Results*

| Scientific degrees | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| *Candidature en langues et littératures françaises et romanes* | 1 |
| *Bachelier en langues et lettres modernes* | 2 |
| *Régendat en langues germanique* | 1 |
| *Bachelier en langues et lettres germaniques* | 1 |
| *Licence en langues et littératures germaniques* | 21 |
| *Master en langues et lettres germaniques* | 10 |
| *Licence en langues et littératures modernes* | 4 |
| *Master en langues et lettres modernes* | 11 |

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[99] If a respondent had several scientific degrees, I decided to retain the highest one, i.e., I would retain the *license* or *master* and not the *bachelier*.

[100] Note that the term *licence* is the older equivalent of the term *master*.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Licence en langues et littératures françaises et romanes* | 2 |
| *License en traduction* | 1 |
| *Master en traduction* | 11 |
| *Master des traductions* | 1 |
| *Master en science et métiers du livre* | 1 |

Concerning their pedagogical degrees[101], there are two major categories: the majority has an *AESS groupe philologie germanique* (24 respondents), and 13 have an *AESS en langues et littératures modernes (orientation générale)*.

*Table 19 - "What is your highest pedagogical degree?"- Results*

| Pedagogical degrees | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| *AESI[102] en langues germaniques* | 4 |
| *AESS[103] groupe philologie germanique* | 24 |
| *AESS Langues et littératures françaises et romanes (orientation générale)* | 2 |
| *AESS en langues et littératures modernes (orientation générale)* | 13 |
| *AESS en langues et littératures modernes (orientation germanique)* | 1 |
| *AESS en langues et lettres françaises et romanes (orientation français langue étrangère)* | 5 |
| *Master en langues et littératures modernes, à finalité didactique* | 1 |
| *CAPAES[104] en langues modernes* | 2 |
| *Module complémentaire d'enseignement de la langue espagnole* | 1 |
| *Modules degré inférieur* | 1 |
| *Certificat d'aptitudes pédagogiques* | 5 |
| No pedagogical title yet | 2 |

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[101] If a respondent had several pedagogical degrees, I retained the highest one.

[102] *AEIS* stands for *Agrégation de l'enseignement secondaire inférieur*.

[103] *AESS* stands for *Agrégation de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur*.

[104] *CAPAES* stands for *Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique approprié à l'Enseignement supérieur*.

The two networks mainly represented are the official WBF network (45%, 27 respondents) and the free subsidised network (43%, 26 respondents).[105]
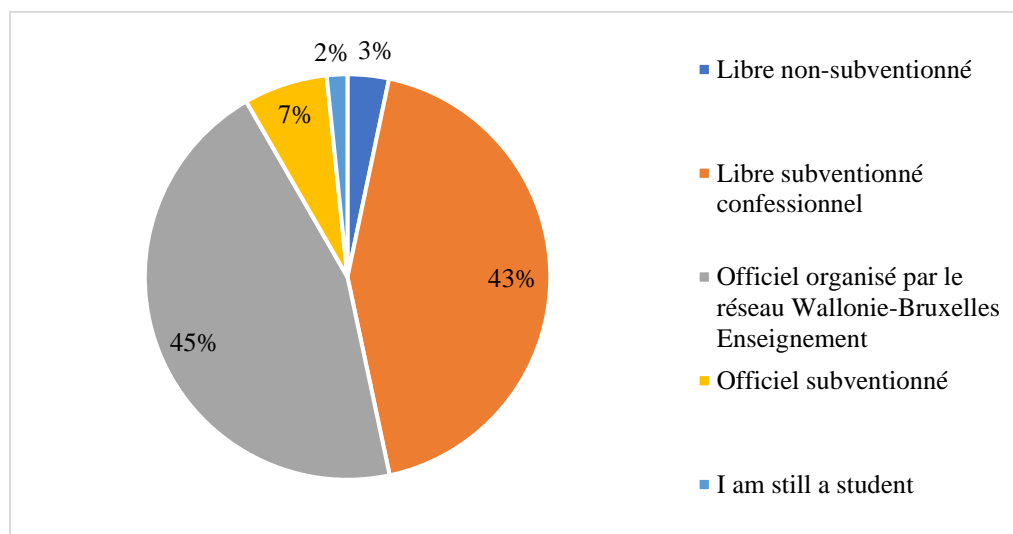


*Figure 9 - "In which network(s) do you teach?" - Results*

The three major categories regarding the type of education[106] are *général* (49 respondents), *technique de qualification* (20 respondents), and *technique de transition* (19 respondents).

The languages[107] taught by the respondents are (from the most to the least taught): English (48 respondents), Dutch (21 respondents), Spanish (16 respondents), German (16 respondents), French[108] (2 respondents) and Italian (1 respondent). English is mainly taught as an LM1[109] and in the 6th year, Dutch as an LM1 in the 4th year, Spanish as an LM2 in the 4th and 6th years, and as an LM3 in 5th and 6th years, and German as an LM2 in the fourth year.

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[105] Note that according to statistics from 2019-2020, the distribution of the networks in secondary education is as follows: 61.42% for the free subsidised school network, 23.37% for the WBE, and 15.21% for the subsidised public school network (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, n.d., n.p.). The rate of networks represented in the sample does not fully represent reality.

[106] Note that the francophone Belgian secondary education comprises different forms of teaching: *général, technique, artistique,* and *professionnel.*

[107] Note that most of the respondents teach two different languages.

[108] These respondents teach French and Spanish and have a *Licence en langues et littératures françaises et romanes*. Note that one of them teaches French to non-French speakers. In this case, it is French as a foreign language.

[109] Note that LM means *langue moderne*. This denomination refers to a foreign language studied in secondary education. Generally, students study up to three foreign languages depending on their options. Therefore, we use the term LM1 to refer to the first foreign language studied from the first year, the LM2 is the second language studied from the third year, and the LM3 is the third language studied from the fifth year.

*Table 20 - "In the following table, indicate which languages you are teaching this year and at which level(s)" - Results*

| Languages | 1st year | 2nd year | 3rd year | 4th year | 5th year | 6th year | 7th year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dutch LM1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 2 |
| Dutch LM2 | / | / | / | 5 | 4 | 4 | / |
| English LM1 | 2 | 2 | / | 22 | 26 | 27 | 4 |
| English LM2 | / | / | / | 8 | 9 | 14 | 1 |
| English LM3 | / | / | / | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| German LM1 | 2 | 1 | / | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| German LM2 | / | / | 2 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| German LM3 | / | / | / | / | 2 | / | / |
| Spanish LM2 | 2[110] | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Spanish LM3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 1 |

In conclusion, the respondents who answered this section are mostly teachers of the *degré supérieur*[111] and they teach in the free subsidised network or the WBF official network.

### 4.2.1.2 Respondent's profiles of section 2: English teachers

Among the 58 respondents, 47 teach English as a foreign language. In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions, I will only mention the results that significantly vary from the respondent's profiles in section 1 or that are crucial to mention. If we have a closer look at the year(s) and at which level(s) the respondents teach, English is mainly taught as a first foreign language (LM1) and in the higher degree (4th, 5th and 6th years).

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[110] Note that, as explained in footnote 109, LM2 is usually studied from the 3rd year and LM3 from the 5th year. Consequently, it would be impossible to have Spanish as an LM2 in the 1st and 2nd years and Spanish as an LM3 in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years. There are two explanations for these answers: either the respondent answered the question incorrectly, or it is a language studied in *promotion sociale*. In addition, both respondents who answered Spanish as an LM2/3 in the first, second and third year are teaching in this field.

[111] The fact that teachers of the *degré supérieur* are the most represented in the sample is a logical consequence of the fact that it is mainly the supervisors teaching in this degree who were contacted to answer the survey. Note that the francophone Belgian education is categorized into two types of "degrees": the *degré inférieur* for the first to the third year, and the *degré supérieur* for the fourth to the sixth year. Another way to classify the francophone Belgian secondary education is to distinguish between three degrees: the first degree includes the first and second years, the second degree includes the third and fourth years, and the third degree includes the fifth and sixth years.

| English | 1st year | 2nd year | 3rd year | 4th year | 5th year | 6th year | 7th year |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| LM1 | 2 | 2 | / | 22 | 26 | 27 | 4 |
| LM2 | / | / | / | 8 | 9 | 14 | 1 |
| LM3 | / | / | / | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

### 4.2.2 Overview of the results on the questions on the press article directed to foreign language teachers

Of the 58 respondents, 74% (i.e., 43) state teaching the press article in their foreign language classes. This shows that the written press seems to be a material used in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, the answer to my research question "Do foreign language teachers use the press article?" would be: "yes". However, it should be mentioned that the respondents who do not use the press article in their classes have different reasons. They prefer using other text genres or find it difficult to answer the students' questions who are not specialists in the specific topic covered by the article. This may seem puzzling because teachers usually choose the type of material they will work with. This is why the choice of texts used in class must be carefully considered. Another explanation the respondents gave is that they consider that the language level in the article is too complicated for their students' level.

Then, they were asked: "In general, how do you **present** the written press?"[112]. The results to this question are shared almost evenly split, with 23 respondents reporting that they teach the written press as a text genre, and the others 20 as any other types of text. There was no sub-question to ask *why* teachers might not present the written press as a specific text genre. I think that they do not master this generic dimension, and lack of time are two hypotheses that explain why they do not present the written press as a specific text genre. Regarding the type of press used by the respondents in their classes, all (43) use the information press, half of them use the opinion press, and only six use the tabloid press. These results confirm what I thought, as I expected that the tabloid press would not be the most used.

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[112] "En **général**, comment **présentez-vous** la presse écrite ?" (see Appendix G, p. 159). Note that the respondents who answered this question are respondents who declared using the press article in their courses.

Regarding the answers to the question "For what **purposes** do you use press articles in your foreign language courses?"[113], the main uses are: to discuss a cultural topic (43), to address specific content (ideas) (42), to cover the news (41), and to practise reading (39). Note that only 24 respondents declare agreeing with the fact that they use the press article to teach media education. Additionally, 27 respondents state that they do not use the press article to deal with a particular text genre.

*Table 22 - "For what purposes do you use press articles in your foreign language courses?" - Results*

|  | *Strongly disagree* | *Disagree* | *Agree* | *Strongly agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| To practise reading | 0 | 0 | 8 | 31 |
| To discuss a cultural topic | 0 | 0 | 10 | 33 |
| To analyse the linguistic specificities of a text (grammatical point, lexical fields, language functions,... | 3 | 6 | 19 | 15 |
| To address a particular content (ideas) | 0 | 1 | 8 | 34 |
| To cover the news | 0 | 2 | 7 | 34 |
| To deal with a particular text genre (e.g., editorial) | 7 | 20 | 12 | 4 |
| To raise students' awareness of media education (e.g., to discover the processes used in a particular type of press, to compare the same information in two types of press...) | 6 | 13 | 15 | 9 |

Regarding how they present the press article, only 17 respondents report presenting this material as a specific text genre, representing 29% (*N*=58) of the respondents. Then, they were asked the question: "In **general**, how do you **teach** the press article?"[114]. The results show that there are 33 answers for "explicitly"[115] and 25 for "implicitly". This means that the respondents tend to employ explicit teaching of the press article more than implicit teaching. However, 33 respondents represent 57% of the total of respondents (58), which is, in my opinion, low.

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[113] "À **quelle(s) fin(s)** avez-vous recours aux articles de presse dans **vos** cours de langues étrangères ?" (See Appendix G, p. 160).

[114] "En **général**, comment **enseignez-vous** la presse écrite ?" (See Appendix G, p. 164).

[115] Note that the propositions for this question were *never, sometimes*, *often*, *very often* and *always*. I considered the items *sometimes*, *often*, *very often* and *always* as a "yes", and *never* as a "no".

Indeed, as explained in Section 2.2 (pp. 10-13), addressing the generic dimensions of a textual genre has many advantages for language learning. For example, we could assume that explicit teaching takes more time than implicit teaching, which could explain why only 57% of the respondents use it. Another reason they do not teach this text genre can be explained by their use of this kind of text. For instance, if they use the press article for reading comprehension or introducing new vocabulary, they may not consider teaching its generic dimension as necessary. However, as these are only assumptions, it could have been interesting to have another question asking the respondents the reason why they do not use explicit teaching.

Then, the respondents who teach explicitly the press article were asked whether they explain to students that there are several genres of written press and that these different genres share their own characteristics. The results indicate that among the 36[116] respondents, 27[117] specify that they employ a generic approach to the press article.
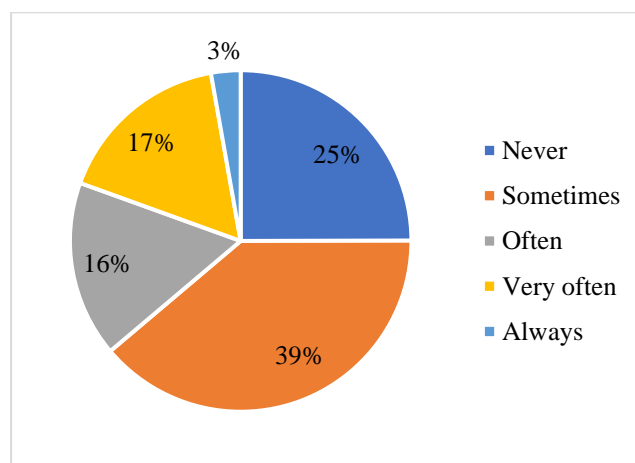


*Figure 10 - "If you teach the print media explicitly, do you explain to students that there are different genres of print media, that these different genres share common characteristics as well as having their own?" - Results*

Afterwards, for the question "When dealing with a news article, **how often** do you make students aware of how to read the article critically? By *critical reading*, we mean questioning

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[116] Note that here, according to the results of the preceding question on explicit or implicit teaching, we should have had 33 answers and not 36, as 33 corresponds to the number of respondents who use explicit teaching of the press article. Three respondents might have answered incorrectly due to fatigue effects. Dörnyei and Taguchi explain that if a survey is too long or monotonous, respondents may begin to respond inaccurately due to tiredness or boredom (2010, p. 9).

[117] Note that I considered that a respondent use a generic approach when he or she answered *sometimes*, *often*, very *often*, and *always*.

the information they read in an article"[118], 30% responded *often*, 19% *very often*, and 9% *always*. This means that 58% (*N*=58) of the respondents raise students' awareness of critical reading. The results demonstrate that the two principal means to teach critical reading are to compare articles dealing with similar information but in different ways and to explain to the students that it is best to do some research about any information that seems questionable. Note that this idea of comparing different sources of similar information alludes to what I found in my textbook analysis of the tabloid press article (see Section 3.2, pp. 50-58). Concerning the reasons not to teach critical reading, the respondents principally mention lack of time.

Regarding *where* the respondents find the press articles they use in their classes, the two primary sources seem to be the Internet (43) and textbooks (39):

*Table 23 - "Where do you find the press articles you use in your courses?" - Results*

|  | *Never* | *Sometimes* | *Often* | *Very often* | *Always* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| On the Internet | 0 | 5 | 5 | 22 | 11 |
| In school textbooks | 4 | 17 | 14 | 8 | 0 |
| In school magazines for teaching purposes (examples: *Current*, *Speak Easy*, *Vocable*…) | 6 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 2 |
| In journals, magazines, newspapers for native speakers | 10 | 10 | 7 | 15 | 1 |

As a conclusion of the results on the press article in the foreign languages classes, it is possible to answer the research question "What are the foreign language teachers' methodology and objectives to teach the press article?". The general results show that the press article is mainly used for discussing a cultural topic, addressing specific content (ideas), dealing with the news and practise reading (see Table 22, p. 76). However, explaining the press article from a text genre approach does not seem regular in the respondents' practice. This point might be related to the fact that respondents are unfamiliar with the generic dimension of text genres and the limitations and difficulties of teaching genres (see Section 5.1, p. 85). Nevertheless, nearly 60% of the teachers state developing students' critical thinking skills using the press article,

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[118] "Lorsque vous traitez un article de presse, à quelle **fréquence** sensibilisez-vous les élèves à la lecture critique de cet article ? Par « lecture critique » nous entendons le fait de questionner les informations qu'ils·elles lisent dans un article ?" (See Appendix G, p. 165).

which is surprising as I would have expected fewer respondents to teach this citizenship dimension, even if it is clearly mentioned in the legal requirement[119]. Indeed, I expected that the respondents would not consider this dimension part of the foreign language course because it can be seen as a waste of time and not sufficiently related to language learning. However, media education is also mentioned in the legal requirement but is not part of the practice of the teachers who responded to this survey.

### 4.2.3 Overview of the results on the questions on the tabloid press article directed to English teachers

The first question asked to English teachers was about their opinion on the given definition (see Appendix G, p. 168) for the tabloid press: "**What do you think** of the definition of the tabloid press article proposed above? Does it match your personal definition of this type of news article? If not, I invite you to write your comments below"[120]. This definition seems to match the respondents' personal definition of the tabloid press article, as only three of them showed their disagreement. Among those who disagreed with my definition, one respondent stated that the exaggerated and fake aspects are missing, another one said that the catchy titles and the fact that these types of news do not provide any interesting information are missing. The last one disagreed with the serious aspect as there is a difference between the seriousness (or not) of a subject and if this subject is treated with seriousness (or not)[121].

One of the objectives of this part of the survey was to find out if the respondents use tabloid press articles in their lessons, and it appeared that 14 respondents do, which represents 30% (*N*=47) of the surveyed English teachers. Considering this sample of the teachers who declare using the tabloid press article, it is interesting to notice that among these 14 teachers, there are 13 women and 1 man. Far from wanting to have a stereotypical thought, it could be hypothesized that women might be more interested in this press than men, which is thus reflected in their teaching choices. However, we have to keep in mind that among the 47 English

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[119] "Comme pour la dimension socioculturelle, la **citoyenneté** (utilisation critique des médias, développement durable, respect de l'environnement…) sera **intégrée** aussi souvent que possible aux activités par le biais des documents proposés et des thématiques abordées" (WBF, 2018, n.p.).

[120] "Que **pensez-vous** de la définition de l'article de presse à sensation proposée ci-dessus ? Correspond-elle à votre définition personnelle de ce type d'article de presse ? Si ce n'est pas le cas, je vous invite à écrire vos commentaires ci-dessous" (see Appendix G, p. 167).

[121] Note that this notion of seriousness in the definition was explained on p. 20 (footnote 27).

teachers, there are only 6 men. Thus, another way to know if women tend to use the tabloid press article more in their lessons is to have an equal number of men and women responding to the survey.

As I expected, the number of respondents who do not use the tabloid press article is relatively high (33 out of 47, representing 70%). Therefore, these respondents were directed to a question to know why they do not use the tabloid press article. Among the reasons to explain this non-use, the 33 respondents were asked to give their opinion using a Likert scale:

*Table 24 - Reasons why the respondents do not teach the tabloid press article - Results*

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| This kind of press is of no interest to the English course. | 6% | 76% | 12% | 6% |
| The tabloid press does not provide any interesting cultural elements for the English course. | 9% | 46% | 33% | 12% |
| The tabloid press does not motivate students. | 15% | 76% | 6% | 3% |
| The content of the tabloid press is not rich enough. | 9% | 30% | 52% | 9% |
| The content of the tabloid press is not treated in a sufficiently objective manner. | 6% | 6% | 58% | 30% |
| The language used in the tabloid press is not beneficial for the English learner. | 18% | 67% | 12% | 3% |
| Students are already confronted too much with this kind of content via reality shows and articles that are circulating on social networks.[122] | 3% | 12% | 58% | 27% |

Table 24 illustrates that the 33 respondents who do not teach the tabloid press article seem to think that the tabloid press is a source of motivation for the students (91%), contains a beneficial language for the English learners (85%) and has interests for the English class (82%). In other words, according to these teachers, the tabloid press article is beneficial to the English class from linguistic and motivational aspects. Note that this is interesting as this match some of the interests of the tabloid press article developed in Section 2.5 (p. 30). Nevertheless, the fact that the tabloid press is not objective enough (88%) and that it resembles content to which students are already too much confronted to (i.e., articles on reality shows on social media) (85%) are the major reasons why the respondents do not use this press. These reasons are linked

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[122] See Appendix G, p. 169.

as they have to do with the possible manipulation of information and the sensationalism of the tabloid press. However, if the respondents point them out as being problems, then it might mean that something has to be done about them. I think that leaving social networks and fake news out of school will not teach students to decode them, which is why it is important to raise the students' awareness through media education. Some respondents have mentioned other reasons why they do not teach this press, among which we find that they have classes for only two hours a week, this theme is not organised in their school or this topic is not of personal interest to these respondents. Besides, two propositions seem to be shared by the respondents: that the tabloid article is culturally interesting (55% disagree and 45% agree) and its content is not rich enough (39% disagree and 61% agree).

Now, if we consider the 14 respondents who use the press article in their lessons, they seem pretty convinced by its usefulness:
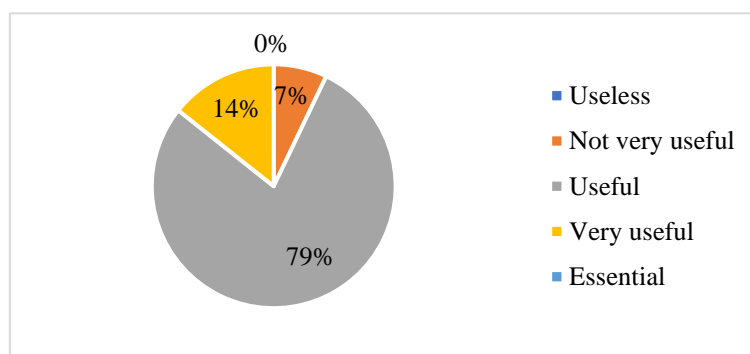


*Figure 11 - "How do you rate the contribution of this specific press to the English course?" - Results*

Moreover, the respondents point out that one of the advantages of the tabloid article is that it is similar to celebrities related-content (14 respondents), a topic students are familiar with. According to some respondents, other advantages are that tabloid press articles are generally shorter (9 respondents), the language is less formal, and the colloquial style might motivate students (9 respondents). In addition, the respondents also indicate that an interesting aspect of the tabloid press article is that it allows a study of sensationalistic linguistic means used to make the story compelling. Besides, they also agree that the presence of photos can make it easier to understand the article's content.

About the respondents' methodology to teach the tabloid press, 64.3% (*N*=14) of them present it as a specific text genre, but the results are quite mixed regarding the fact that they teach it explicitly or implicitly:

|  | *Never* | *Sometimes* | *Often* | *Very often* | *Always* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Explicitly, i.e. by clarifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the text genre, then having them exercise through guided practice and autonomous practice. | 7% | 36% | 21% | 29% | 7% |
| Implicitly, i.e. by letting the students discover the differences for themselves and asking them to imitate this text genre without explaining its characteristics. | 36% | 43% | 14% | 7% | 0% |

Those who teach the tabloid press article explicitly (14) were asked how they do it: "If you are working **explicitly** with the tabloid press, do you explain to students that the tabloid press is a particular kind of press, which shares common features with other kinds of press but has its own characteristics?"[123]. The answers to this question led to different results:
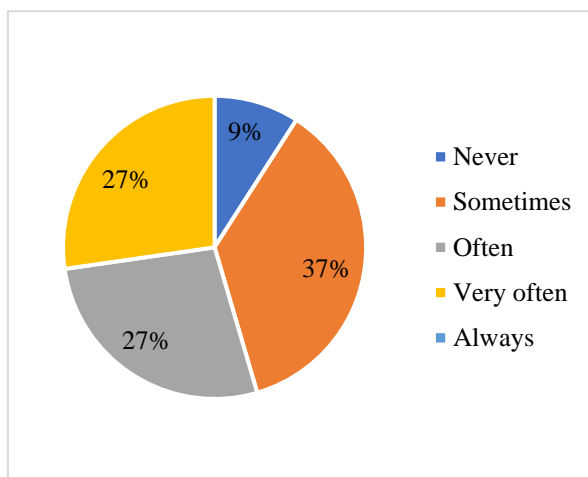


*Figure 12 - "If you are working explicitly with the tabloid press, do you explain to students that the tabloid press is a particular kind of press, which shares common features with other kinds of press but has its own characteristics?" - Results*

Furthermore, regarding respondents' methodology to approach the tabloid press, all 14 respondents raise the students' critical thinking, but not at the same frequency:

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[123] The French version of this question is the following: "Si vous travaillez l'article de presse à sensation de manière explicite, expliquez-vous aux élèves que la presse à sensation est un genre de presse particulier, qui partage des caractéristiques communes avec d'autres genres de presse mais qui possède des caractéristiques qui lui sont propres ?" (see Appendix G, p. 164).

*Figure 13 - "When dealing with a sensational news story, how often do you make students aware of critical reading?" - Results*

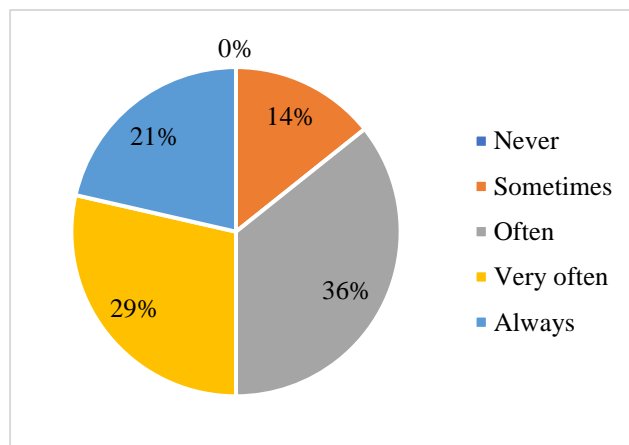In order to make students aware of critical reading, the respondents make students compare articles about the same information but that deal with it differently and or explain that it is always best to ask about information that seems questionable[124].

## 4.3    Conclusion and perspectives

Regarding the results of the press article, it seems that it is a material used by the respondents. The overall trend indicates that the respondents use the information press and do not present it as a text genre. Some raise the students' awareness of critical reading using the press article. However, using the press article for media education is not a unanimous practice among the respondents, which is curious as I think that critical reading and media education might go together considering a material such as the press article. In hindsight, it would have been interesting to know more about teachers' thoughts and practice of media education and ask questions like: "Do you think it is (also) the role of the language teacher to teach media education? "Do you teach media education?", "Which type of materials do you use to teach media education?".

Besides, the tabloid press article is not popular among respondents' practices. However, even if most of the respondents state not using this kind of press article (33 out of a total of 47), they nevertheless acknowledge that it has interests for the English as a foreign language class from a motivational and linguistic point of view. The reasons *why* these respondents do not include the tabloid press article in their courses do not seem to be because they think that it is useless. On the contrary, some of them think that this kind of article is not interesting from a

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[124] Note that both ways of working on students' critical reading were proposed in the survey.

cultural point of view or in terms of the richness of its content. Others consider it too complicated for their students, they are running out of time or because it is not planned in their school.

It is essential to specify that all the results and conclusions drawn from this survey have to be considered regarding the number of respondents and their specific profiles as they are training supervisors for the University of Liège students and are mainly from the Province of Liège. We can also speculate that respondents may have been influenced by the fact that the survey came from a university student and therefore assumed that the university institution would frown upon the tabloid press article. In other words, respondents' answers may have been influenced by the fact that the survey came from the academic world. In addition, other biases have to be taken into account and should not be lost sight of. Among these biases, we find the *social desirability bias*[125]. Also, it can be argued that if the respondents answered this survey, it means that they were interested in its topics. In other words, these respondents might already be sensitive to them. Therefore, we might lack respondents who might be against the topic of the press article and the influencers with regard to Noémie Vanherck's survey.

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[125] Reminder: it refers to the fact that "people do not always provide true answers about themselves; that is, the results represent what the respondents report to feel or believe, rather than what they actually feel or believe" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 8).

## 5.    The (tabloid) press article: methodological suggestions

This chapter suggests methodological approaches for teaching the press article[126]. First, I tried to critically examine my challenge, which is proving that the tabloid press article is useful material for learning English, and decided to present some limitations and difficulties related to the tabloid press article. In order to feed my thoughts on these limitations and difficulties, I used the subchapter "Aperçu de certaines difficultés rencontrées par les (futurs) enseignants de langues modernes dans l'enseignement des genres textuels" (Simons, 2018b , pp. 214-220) as a starting point as it enumerates some of the generic approach's difficulties. Then, I will come up with some limitations and difficulties that I believe are specific to the text type of the tabloid press article.

In terms of methodological suggestions, I will propose three different modes of organisation to teach the press article: the didactic sequence, the isolated lessons and the open access. About the didactic sequence, I have to specify that I did not have the opportunity to observe or teach lessons on the press article myself. Nevertheless, I have the chance to present a didactic sequence conceived and taught by one of my fellow students, Camille Guillaume[127], within the scope of her practice lessons for the course of *Didactique en langues et littératures modernes*. Furthermore, with her help, I could establish a survey directed to her students to know more about their opinions on the press article. I will thus present her didactic sequence and its objectives, as well as the student survey results.

### 5.1    Limitations and difficulties related to the text type of the tabloid press article

#### 5.1.1 Lack of scientific background

One of the central and general problems of using the text genre is that some teachers did not receive training about this topic during their scientific education. Due to this lack of scientific background, some teachers will thus be hesitant about teaching a material they are not familiar with or trained to use. Generally, teachers' scientific background is limited to literary text types. This issue could thus be solved by including a scientific background in the formal education of future teachers (Simons, 2018b, pp. 215-216).

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[126] Note that what is suggested for teaching the press article in this chapter is also valid for the tabloid press article. This will be made clear when it comes to specific suggestions for the tabloid press article.

[127] I heard about her sequence through Prof. Simons, who introduced me to her.

### 5.1.2 Text genre as a superfluous notion for the foreign language class

According to Simons, teachers are convinced of the added value of teaching text genres. However, they consider it time-consuming, an additional task to what is required by the curriculum, and that it is reserved for classes with a "high level". This point of view is due to the fact that teachers believe that text genres bring another dimension to teaching, and do not consider the text genre as "l'élément qui *rassemble* les autres dimensions, qui les *fédère*, et qui les *rend significatives* aux yeux des apprenants" (Simons, 2018b, p. 217). Therefore, introducing a generic dimension in the foreign language classroom is "donner du sens aux apprentissages" (Simons, 2018b, p. 218).

### 5.1.3 Choosing the material

Regarding text genre teaching, teachers might ask themselves whether they will present only one example of a specific text genre or several. The risk of working with only one example is that the students reduce the text genre to the model they were shown. Moreover, limiting the text genre to one example does not reflect reality or the variety of genres (Simons, 2018b, pp. 218-219).

Moreover, teachers might also hesitate on another point regarding the choice of materials: whether they will deal with authentic texts[128]. In this regard, teachers have three options:

1) using authentic documents;
2) using documents that have been modified to be accessible to the students; this can be done by inventing a text from already existing models, simplifying or even complexifying a text;
3) another possibility is to mix authentic and modified documents. In this case, it is important to be clear with the students and to specify which document is authentic and which one is modified. These simplifications or complexifications are done in order to meet the students' needs and level. (Simons, 2018b, p. 219)

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[128] Authentic texts are "those written and oral communications produced by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group" (Galloway, 1998, p. 133, as cited in Atkin Kroek, 2015, p. 24).

*5.1.4 Lack of methodologic use of text genres*

Once they have chosen a text genre, teachers might be confused by the lack of methodological use of text genres. Simons states that both the *PFE canevas*[129] and *canevas par situation-problème* (see p. 13) are canvasses that can be used to teach text genres. It is important to mention that a productive task is the purpose of the *PFE canevas*; however, this task may not be directly linked to the text genre if it has been seen receptively. For example, if the text genre is the property advertisement, the productive task may be writing an email to obtain further information (Simons, 2018b, pp. 221-240).

*5.1.5 Text genres and the school curriculum[130]*

In order to choose the text genre and insert it into the school curriculum, the teacher must consider at least two criteria : "a) la vraisemblance d'emploi du GT en dehors du contexte scolaire et b) la difficulté intrinsèque du GT dans le développement de l'apprenant" (Simons, 2021-2022, pp. 182-183).

Regarding the first criterion, the teacher can focus on text genres like instructions and classroom rules at the beginning of the learning process and deal with the Curriculum Vitae and the cover letter for the end of secondary school (Simons, 2021-2022, p. 183). There is thus this logic of thinking about what is necessary or age-appropriate for the learners and what makes sense for them outside the school context.

Then, regarding the second criterion, some text genres are more complex than others, which is closely linked to their macro-function. Indeed, the macro-function "to argue" is more complex than "to describe", a classification of the macro-functions in terms of difficulty would be the following:

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[129] *PFE* stands for *Présentation Fixation Exploitation*, which is similar to the *Present Practice Produce* canvas. The *PFE canevas* is based on the following principle: "exposition à un input → clarification de l'input → assimilation progressive de cet input à travers différents types d'exercices → production orale et / ou écrite (output)." (Simons, 2018b, p. 222).

[130] Note that this section is not present in "Pistes méthodologiques pour mettre en œuvre des séquences didactiques intégrant la notion de genre textuel" (Simons, 2018b, pp. 220-240). This section was based on Simons' course notes (V. LES GENRES TEXTUELS DANS LES FAMILLES DE TÂCHES EN LANGUES ÉTRANGÈRES, University of Liège, 2021-2022) p. 176.

*Figure 14 - Macro-functions scale (taken from Simons, 2021-2022, p. 183)*

### 5.1.6 Limitations and difficulties specifically related to the tabloid press article

In addition to what has been mentioned in Sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.6, I wanted to add other possible constraints related to the tabloid press article.

#### 5.1.6.1   Working with the bad press

I hypothesize that one of the main difficulties, maybe and even the reason why teachers do not use tabloid press articles, is due to the reputation of these articles. Indeed, the tabloid press is not considered good journalism compared to broadsheets because of its lack of seriousness and the subjects it deals with. As a result, if a teacher has this negative point of view on the tabloid press, why would it be teaching material? However, I think that this depends on how one decides to perceive this material. If tabloid press articles are reduced to the fact that they are about gossip, celebrities, crimes and tall stories, then, indeed, what would be their added value for English learning if not to be entertaining? Nevertheless, if we have a closer look at the style and language used in these articles and how the information is presented, we open up the possibilities to consider this material and its advantages for learning English as a foreign language.

#### 5.1.6.2   Level limitation

Considering the textbook analysis done in the framework of this dissertation (see Section 3.2.2, pp. 52-58), it appeared that activities related to the tabloid press article were mainly directed to upper-intermediate learners. As a result of this level limitation, some teachers could be reluctant to tackle this kind of activity with students from lower levels. However, I think that the study of text genres, particularly the tabloid press article, is not limited to upper-intermediate learners. Indeed, Sanderson states that the newspaper is a multi-level material, from elementary to advanced, and suggests various activities aimed at different learning levels (1999, p. 4). Moreover, I would add that working with tabloid press articles can be done using pictures and headlines and does not necessarily imply an in-depth reading of the article.

*5.1.6.3*  Activities

Again, if we look at the textbook analysis, the comparison of broadsheet newspapers and tab-loids was a recurrent activity. However, the activities related to the tabloid press article will vary following the students' level. Indeed, comparing newspapers might not be a good activity for beginners, while focusing on vocabulary and/or grammar is possible. The difficulty of the activities will be closely linked to the difficulty of the article itself. The teacher's choice of materials is significant in learning and teaching text genres.

## 5.2   Methodological suggestions for the teaching of the press article

In this section, I will provide methodological suggestions to teach the (tabloid) press article using different types of organisation: the didactic sequence, isolated lessons and open access.

### *5.2.1 The press article in a didactic sequence*

In order to provide an example of a didactic sequence, I have the chance to present[131] a didactic sequence conceived by one of my fellow students: Camille Guillaume. In addition, I will present the results of a survey through which I collected students' opinions on this sequence. Guillaume created a sequence articulated around the press article (see Appendix I, pp. 179-204) within the scope of a 12-hour internship. She had a class of 23 students (20 students are in the fifth year and have English as their first foreign language, and 3 students are in the sixth year and have English as their second foreign language). This sequence follows the *PFE canevas*[132] and includes the four macro-skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. The final objectives of this sequence are writing a press article and mastering the passive voice at all tenses. The intermediate objectives are mastering the vocabulary linked to the press article, writing the title, the standfirst and the body of an article.

#### 5.2.1.1   A generic approach to the news article

In this section, I will summarise how Camille Guillaume adopted a generic approach to the news article. Through different activities, students will learn about:

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[131] Note that Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.1.1. have been proofread by Camille Guillaume to ensure that what I have described reflects the objectives of her sequence.

[132] The *PFE canevas* is based on the following principle: "exposition à un input → clarification de l'input → assimilation progressive de cet input à travers différents types d'exercices → production orale et / ou écrite (output)" (Simons, 2018b, p. 222).

- the different types of newspapers: a TV guide, a magazine, a Sunday newspaper, a tabloid, a journal, a daily newspaper and a local newspaper;
- the newspaper sections: world news, business, editorial, sports, obituary pages, horoscope;
- the people related to newspapers: the columnist, the war correspondent, the editor, the paparazzo, the editorialist and the copy editor;
- the difference between feature stories and news stories;
- the different parts of a news story: the headline, the supporting paragraph(s), the dateline, the caption, the conclusion, the lead, the by-line and the picture.

Moreover, Camille Guillaume provided the students with tips for writing a striking lead and the body paragraphs:



*Figure 16 - Tips for a striking lead (taken from Guillaume, 2022, p. 14, see Appendix I, p. 194)*



*Figure 15 - Tips for an interesting body paragraph (taken from Guillaume, 2022, p. 16, see Appendix I, p. 196)*

She also enumerates strategies used in headlines:



**Techniques commonly used in headlines**
1. Omission of articles;
2. Play on words;
3. Passive sentences written without the auxiliary verbs;
4. Infinitive used for future actions;
5. Punctuation used to add new meaning;
6. Preposition change
   - Involved in = in
   - Because of, about= over
   - In favor of = for
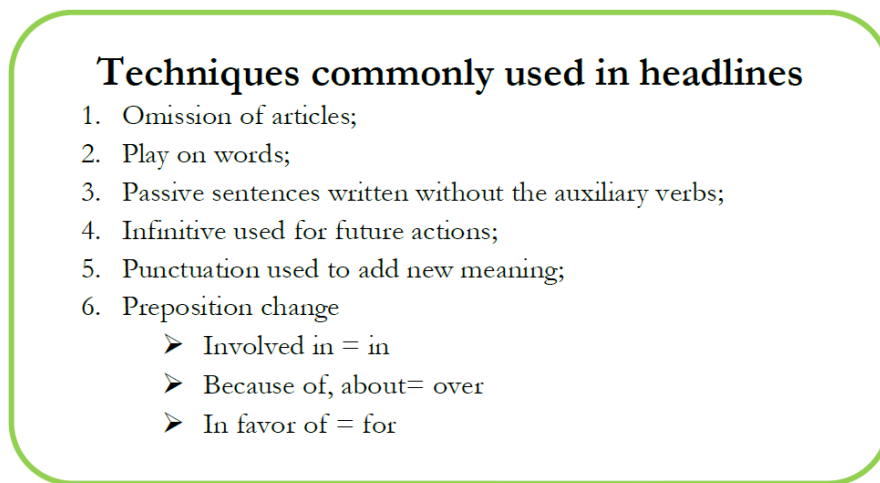
*Figure 17 - Techniques commonly used in headlines (Guillaume, 2022, p. 18, see Appendix I, p. 198)*

All these tips and techniques are generic invariants of the news story identified by Camille Guillaume. These tools help students understand this text genre and its main characteristics in writing a press article.

This didactic sequence demonstrates that a text genre can be the centrepiece of a sequence as the different activities and skills are articulated around this generic approach. Indeed, the text genre of the press article was used in order to present the passive voice, stylistic and linguistic characteristics of the press article through various activities and skills.

5.2.1.2  Survey directed to students who had the didactic sequence on the press article
The purpose of this survey[133] was to learn about the students' interests regarding the press article as a text genre, their reading habits and thoughts on media education. I am aware that 19 students are not a representative sample of the students' opinion in general; however, having their thoughts on this theme is, I think, making a step forward.

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[133] The reader can find the survey and its results in Appendix J, pp. 205-207.

5.2.1.2 <u>Methodology</u>

To ensure that the students understand all the questions, the survey was written in French. I have to specify that this survey was composed of questions written by Camille Guillaume[134] as well as questions that I wrote in order to get the students' opinions on the press article. In total, the survey is composed of 12 questions and questions 5 to 12 are questions that I wrote. Regarding the type of questions I used, there is one "yes-no" question, multiple-choice questions, and questions based on Likert scales. Generally, Likert scales are composed of 5 to 7 options, but I proposed four options to avoid central/neutral answers. This survey was conducted on Google Forms as it is an easy platform. Since Camille Guillaume could not use the Internet with her students that day, she gave them a paper version of it. In order to get the results, she kindly counted and sent them to me.

5.2.1.3 <u>Results</u>

For 4 of the 19 respondents, this was the first time they worked on the text genre of the press article in the scope of a foreign language class. Most respondents (17) found this sequence interesting, which is, I think, a reason to include the press article in foreign language classes (see Appendix J, p. 205). If the respondents find it interesting, this will positively impact their learning motivation. Then, most of them (16) consider that the sequence was helpful in order to understand the generic invariants of the press article (see Appendix J, p. 205). We can notice in Table 26 that this didactic sequence was mainly helpful for understanding the press article genre (15), and working with the press article text genre seems to be a way to practise different aspects of English learning like writing (11 respondents). Moreover, it is interesting that 7 respondents also show some interest in working with authentic documents. Indeed, authentic documents might seem complicated for some students as they are written by and for native speakers.

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[134] She wrote those questions in to get the students' feedback on her lessons within the scope of analysing her sequence for the *Dossier Professionnel Réflexif*. This work closes the training in languages and literatures didactics as it aims at adopting a line of thought on our training and combining it with theoretical notions and our practices.

*Table 26 - "According to you, this sequence on the press article..." - Results*

| According to you, this sequence on the press article… | Number of respondents (/19) |
|---|---|
| didn't help me learn English. | 0 |
| enabled me to enrich my vocabulary. | 7 |
| allowed me to practise reading in English. | 5 |
| gave me a better understanding of this text genre. | 15 |
| allowed me to practise my writing skills. | 11 |
| was a source of motivation for learning English. | 2 |
| was interesting because it allowed me to work with "real" documents and not documents from textbooks. | 7 |

The respondents were asked "In the context of another sequence on the press article, what kind(s) of press article would you be interested in working on?" (see Appendix J, p. 206). The results show that they seem more interested to learn about the news press (12 respondents), which might demonstrate that they want to know about everyday information and facts. This is interesting because I think that people usually consider that teenagers lack interest in the news. They even seem to prefer the news press over the tabloid press (7 respondents), which is the press I expected them to choose as its themes are similar to those of reality shows. However, I think that one of the possible biases of this question is due to the connotation that this type of press has. Indeed, the tabloid press generally has bad connotations, and thus people might not admit that they like or read this kind of press. The respondents were also asked if a "sequence on the press article would motivate [them] to read more in English outside the classroom?" (see Appendix J, p. 207). The results indicate that 13 students do not seem to consider this kind of didactic sequence as an extracurricular motivation for reading in English. However, it is interesting to observe that 16 students would find it interesting to develop their critical minds through the press article. Therefore, it demonstrates that the respondents would like to have some classes on media education.

5.2.1.4 Conclusion of the student survey on the press article

As I stated earlier, I am aware that the results of this survey are restricted by the number of respondents (19). However, they were encouraged to be honest while responding to these

questions, which I hope they were. Moreover, I tried to write non-biased so they would feel free to give their opinions. I kept these facts in mind and considered that it was still possible to write some conclusions.

Having lessons on the press article was new and interesting for three-quarters of the respondents. Most of the respondents (15) admit having a better understanding of this text genre through the lessons, and 11 declared that these lessons helped them practise writing in English. However, according to their reading habits and motivation, reading skills seem not what they are keen on. Hence, 14 respondents show interest in developing their critical minds through the press article. This last conclusion is interesting because it might reflect that students are conscious that media are not objective and somehow manipulative and that they need some guidance to understand and overstep the constructions of media discourse. In short, this students' survey highlights the importance of working with a generic approach and that this kind of approach is a way to encompass several learning aspects.

### 5.2.2 The press article in isolated lessons

As presented in Section 5.2.1, the press article is a material that can be used as the centre of a didactic sequence which represents a set of lessons. However, this material can also be used in *isolated lessons* (i.e., lessons that are not part of a didactic sequence). For example, once a month, the teacher could dedicate one or two lessons on the press article that are not part of a didactic sequence.

Sanderson wrote *Using Newspapers in the Classroom* (1999), a book in which teachers will find all kinds of activities for isolated lessons. Each activity is related to a specific part of the newspaper (e.g., the headline, articles, advertisements, horoscope, etc.) and is detailed with its preparation, what is done in class, how to extend the activity and some extra notes for the teacher. In addition, in the introduction to the book, the author provides the reader with useful information about the organisation and preparation of a lesson on the newspaper.

Among these suggestions, I would like to present Sanderson's advice to make newspaper materials accessible to pre-intermediate students. Indeed, during my textbook analysis (see pp. 50-58), I observed that activities related to the tabloid press article were mainly directed to the upper-intermediate level. I find it interesting to prove that this material is accessible to all learning levels. Sanderson suggests four steps that the teacher can consider in making the newspaper accessible to pre-intermediate students: a pre-activity, a careful selection of materials and design of tasks and recycling materials. The pre-activity "involves familiarising students with

the content of the materials" (Sanderson, 1999, p. 13). This aims to make students feel more comfortable with the activity of reading the press article and will encourage their participation. Then, the selection of materials has to take several factors into account like the "grammatical complexity of the text, the density of information, the degree of information recycling, the amount of low-frequency vocabulary, the explicitness of the information, the discourse structure, and whether or not the information is presented in chronological order" (Sanderson, 1999, p. 15).

The author also suggests using relatively short newspaper items for pre-intermediate students so as not to lose their motivation (1999, p. 15). Regarding the design of tasks, Sanderson asserts that low-level students can work with complex texts if the tasks related to the text are adapted to their level. He proposes some examples of reading tasks for students who are in this particular situation: circling or underlining all the words they know in the text, circling or underlining words related to the same topic, identifying the main subject of the text, answering yes/no or Wh-questions (Sanderson, 1999, pp. 15-16). Finally, another of Sanderson's suggestions is to reuse the materials used for one activity but to execute different tasks. Working on already known material with other tasks will "offer students a new and fresh point of entry to materials which they may previously have found difficult" (Sanderson, 1999, p. 16). Recycling materials will also allow working on different skills and strategies with a document they are already familiar with. It will also help students to get a deeper understanding of the text and increase their confidence in working with difficult material (Sanderson, 1999, p. 16).

*5.2.3 The press article in open access*

The press article can also be used in *open access*[135], which means that students have access to different press articles accompanied by reading tasks and their corrections. Open access aims to allow students to work at their rhythm and to promote independent learning. Regarding autonomous learning, Lee and Morrison state that the newspaper article can be a tool to develop autonomous language learning skills. They define the learner's autonomy using Little's words (1990), according to which

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[135] Definition : "[l]'accès-libre est une manière possible d'organiser l'apprentissage. Il s'agit d'aménager un lieu (un coin de classe, la médiathèque ou la bibliothèque…), de déterminer les moments où les élèves peuvent accéder librement à un choix de textes, des fiches d'activités et d'autocorrection. L'organisation en groupe-classe est alors abandonnée. Ceci permet des moments d'apprentissage individualisé et différencié" (Ministère de la Communauté française, Cahier 5, 2000, p. 13).

learner autonomy is essentially a matter of "the learner's psychological reaction to the process and content of learning. It is to be found in a wide variety of behaviours as a capacity for detachment, critical affection, decision-making and independent action. (Little, as cited in Lee & Morrison, 1998, p. 91)

Lee and Morrison also cite Sturtridge (1982) and Guy (1993), who distinguish between two types of materials: *learning* and *practice materials* in the framework of *autonomous learning*[136]. On the one hand, learning materials do not have a specific learning structure and thus offer many learning options, which motivates the student to develop learning skills. On the other hand, practice materials have a specific structure for more guided learning, implying fewer decisions from the learner. According to Lee and Morrison, the newspaper article can be both a learning and practice material. If a press article comes from a newspaper and does not come from a textbook, it generally lacks pedagogical instructions and is considered learning material. In this case, the learner has to identify their own needs and/or discuss the material with the help of a teacher (1998, pp. 92-93). This way, the learning of a newspaper article can be personalized regarding the learner's "own learning goals and appropriate learning strategies. This is an important step in preparing learners for autonomy" (Lee & Morrison,1998, p. 93). If the newspaper article study or analysis is guided by a teacher's instructions, it will thus be a practice material. Using the newspaper article as learning and practice material has the advantage of meeting the learner's needs and the teacher's expectations (1998, p. 94).

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[136] "Holec (1981, p.3) defines *learner autonomy* as "the ability to take charge of one's learning", which means to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.: determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired" (Holec as cited in Little, 1996, p. 2).

## 6.    Summary and conclusion

In order to conclude this dissertation, I propose summarising the answers I found to my research questions. First, "**What are the characteristics of the press article as a text genre?**". The press article belongs to the print media family and the newspapers subfamily, and to identify its characteristics, I referred to Adam (1997), who identified the peritextual components of editorial genres (i.e., newspaper peritext, verbal and iconographic peritext of the article) as well as the generic invariants of the written press genre (i.e., enunciation, length, pragmatic, composition and stylistic). Then, the text genre of the press article can be divided into different text types depending on the type of newspaper to which the text belongs (i.e., tabloids or broadsheets) and its version (i.e., online or paper).

If we now focus on the research question "**What are the characteristics of the tabloid press article?**", we can conclude that it is characterised by different elements such as its format and form, its topics, the presence of pictures and captions, its structure, its stylistic features, its communicative functions, its linguistic features and its headlines.

Concerning the question "**Does the notion of press article appear in the legal requirements of the WBF and the *CEFR*?**" it turns out that the notion of the press article appears through various denominations (media, newspaper, article, press article, magazine). However, the press article was only found as examples of written production or as a support for reading or speaking and is never defined. In addition, it is mainly referred to as material for reading and writing skills.

Considering the textbook analysis, the main question guiding this analysis was "**Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles explicitly or non-explicitly?**"[137]. It has been observed that only a few textbooks (10 on 49) explicitly mention tabloid press articles. If we compare the prescribed data and the teaching material, we can state that they both refer to the (tabloid) press article, but there is no great emphasis on this text genre. Indeed, there is no definition of the press article in the legal requirements and the *CEFR* nor in textbooks. Nevertheless, since some textbooks, including tabloid press articles, present definitions of this type of article, we can argue that this is a step towards a generic approach to this text genre.

Besides, the answer to the question "**Do foreign language teachers use the press article?**" is "yes", as the survey of language teachers showed that the press article is a material used by most of them (43 respondents out of 58). However, only a few English teachers (14 out of

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[137] Initially, the question was "Do recent English textbooks include tabloid press articles?". However, as I expected to find very few tabloid articles, I modified my research question during my textbook analysis.

47) include the tabloid press article in their lessons (“**Do English teachers use the tabloid press article?**”). For both materials, the press article and the tabloid press article, it appeared that they are sometimes used to develop students' critical thinking skills; more specifically, 40 respondents out of 43 for the press article and 12 respondents out of 14 for the tabloid press article. However, these materials are rarely used to teach media education. Nonetheless, even if some teachers declared not to use the tabloid press article, they seem to be aware that this kind of press adds value to the English as a foreign language class.

This dissertation aimed to demonstrate whether tabloid journalism has benefits for teaching and learning English and therefore answer the question “**What are the advantages of using tabloid press articles for English teaching and learning?**”. These interests were defined on different levels. In substance, the tabloid press article is beneficial for developing the student's motivation, culture and critical thinking. Then, regarding its form, its language, mainly its vocabulary and style, as well as the presence of pictures and the length of the articles, are interesting aspects in the context of learning English. However, the teacher's role in the article choice is more than crucial, as he/she will be able to judge the value of a specific text. Indeed, even if my main aim is to defend the interest of the sensational press article for learning English, one should not lose sight of the fact that not all articles will be useful or even usable. Additionally, some articles will deal with sensitive subjects and spread stereotypes. This is why I think it is more than necessary for teachers to teach their students about critical reading and media literacy.

I am aware that this dissertation has some limitations, notably due to the limited number of pages and some methodological choices, which is why I have decided to present some of them to provide possible solutions for further research. Creating a didactic sequence on the press article and evaluating it would have been the ideal achievement of this dissertation. However, due to a lack of time and the limited number of pages of this dissertation, I found myself unable to do so. I should also point out that in the survey, teachers who wished to do so were invited to contact me so that I could observe a lesson on the tabloid article and possibly teach some lessons on this topic myself. However, I did not get any feedback on this, which can be explained by various reasons, such as the health context experienced over the last two years. Nevertheless, I had the chance to give a preview of a didactic sequence on the press article through the presentation of Camille Guillaume's sequence. Furthermore, this didactic sequence taught me that it is possible to focus a whole sequence around a text genre, which in this case is the text genre of the press article.

Another limitation of this dissertation is that, although the results obtained regarding the characteristics of the tabloid article are based on corpus studies, the present work does not contain a corpus study on the tabloid article that could confirm the results presented. For this reason, for further research, it would be interesting to develop the present research on the tabloid press article with a corpus analysis of authentic tabloid press articles in order to confirm and complete the characteristics of the tabloid press articles that have been found.

Moreover, the analysis of the textbooks could have been more detailed if a more precise method of analysis had been used and if the selected corpus had considered older textbooks (i.e., textbooks dating from before 2000).

Similarly, the survey results are also limited by, for example, the number of respondents (58), the fact that they are the supervisors of students at the University of Liège and the social desirability bias. In order to counteract this, it would be necessary to collect a more significant number of respondents, especially those who no longer have any particular contact with the academic sector, in order to be able to present the average teachers. Another suggestion would be to conduct another survey which might be, this time, directed to students to know more about their motivation regarding the tabloid press article.

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